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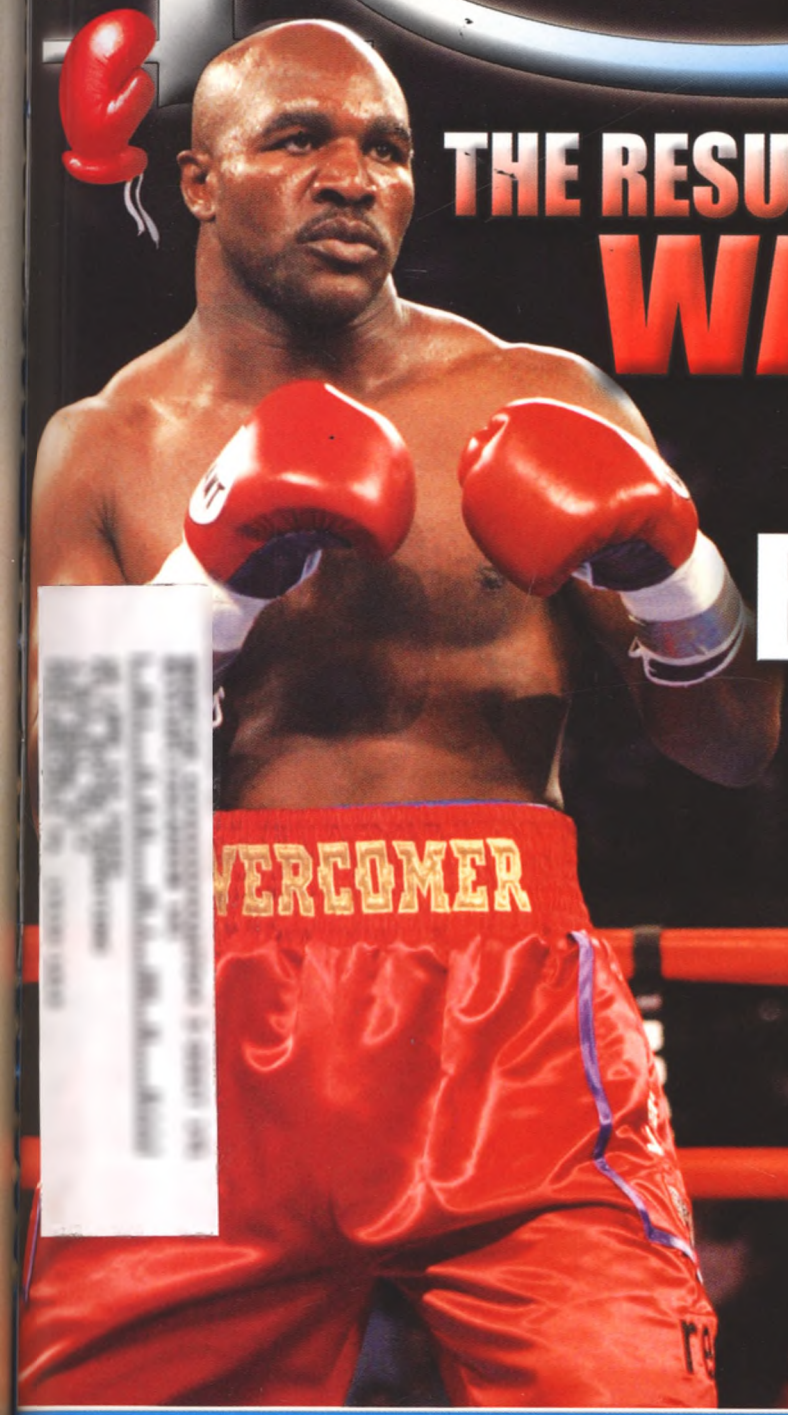

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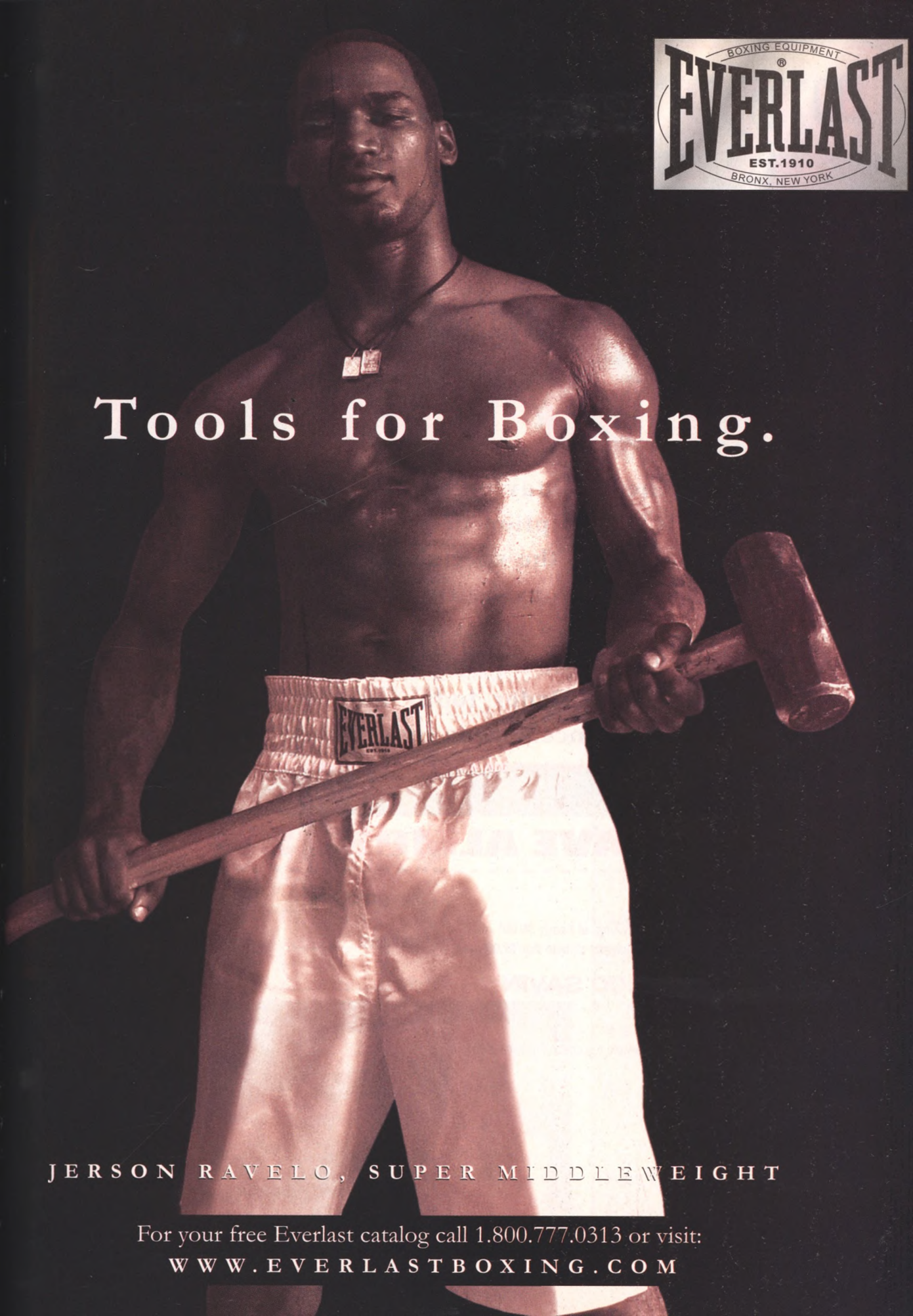
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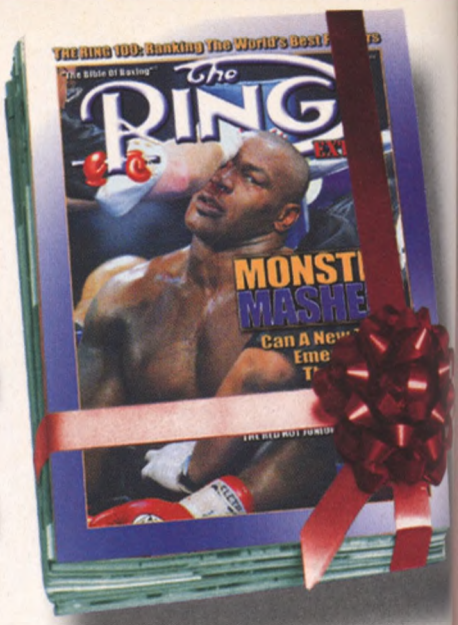

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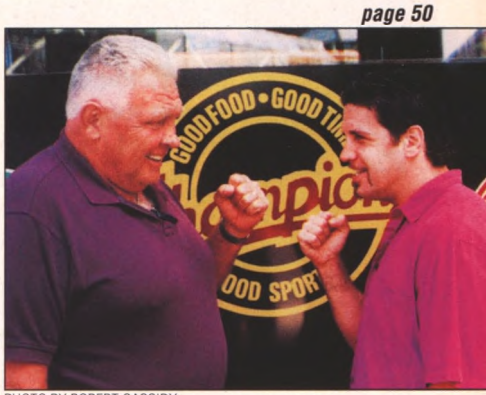

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RINGSIDE

As THE RING has survived for more than 80 years, we figured we must be doing something right. But complacency is a dangerous state of mind, and in an effort to get to know our readers better and find out how we can better serve them, we published a "Reader Survey" in the November 2002 issue of THE RING EXTRA. I'd like to thank everybody who participated and share some of the things we discovered about you and your fellow readers.

The most gratifying news is that, contrary to popular opinion, THE RING's readers don't all have one foot in the grave. Based on the survey, 65 percent of our readers are under 40, while 38 percent are under 30. The largest demographic was the 31 to 40 age group, with the 20-25 age group coming in second.

We also discovered that once you read THE RING, you'll probably come back for more. A whopping 83 percent of those who responded to the survey had also read the previous three issues. Moreover, 60 percent of RING readers also buy at least one other boxing magazine per month. In fact, 52 percent of readers surveyed also read *KO*, THE RING's sister magazine.

It also appears that RING readers are excellent boxing consumers in general. A highly significant 73 percent have purchased at least one pay-per-view fight during the past 12 months, with 53 percent having purchased more than one. The news isn't quite so upbeat when it comes to attending live cards, with only 48 percent having done so in the past 12 months, but geographical considerations could certainly skew that figure.

The two most popular television programs among readers are ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* and HBO's *World Championship Boxing*, which are watched by 89 and 87 percent, respectively. Next was HBO's *Boxing After Dark* with 78 percent. *Showtime Championship Boxing* and Fox SportsNet's *Sunday Night Fights* were tied at 65 percent. After that came *ShoBox* (39 percent), *Solo Boxeo* (26 percent), *Boxeo Telemundo* (12 percent), and *Thunderbox* (10 percent).

Fifty-eight percent of readers responding also follow boxing on the Internet, with fightnews.com (20 percent), maxboxing.com (19 percent), hbo.com (18 percent), and espn.com (14 percent) getting the most hits.

Readers also told us that THE RING's championship policy, ratings, in-depth articles, and color photography are the main reasons they buy the magazine. The thing they'd most like to change is the timeliness of its contents. Unfortunately, a lag time between an event and publication is one of the tribulations common to all monthly magazines.

In order to compensate, our team of writers—undoubtedly the best in the business—go beyond the sort of straightforward reporting you'll typically find in newspapers or on boxing Web sites the day after a fight. THE RING analyzes, criticizes, probes, praises, and philosophizes. Many articles project into the future, while others use historical points of reference to place current events in perspective. Readers will also find out more about what makes boxers tick, as both fighters and individuals, on the pages of THE RING than anywhere else. And when it comes to combating corruption by providing progressive alternatives, we're clearly the undisputed champion.

The best things in life are usually worth waiting for, and the entire staff is thrilled that so many of you think that THE RING belongs in that category. Thanks again to all who responded to our survey, and for those of you who didn't, the pages of our monthly "Come Out Writing" section are always open for further commentary.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 83, No. 2 February 2

The Ring

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A RARE FIND FOR COLLECTORS!

A recent inventory of our Pennsylvania warehouse has uncovered several editions of *The Ring* that had been unavailable for years. The supply on these rare collectors' items is very small and they will go quickly!

October 1953: Marciano-LaStarza preview, Don Cockell, Tod Morgan, New York fighters, TV and boxing.

August 1955: Rocky Marciano, Carmen Basilio, Carmelo Costa, Moore-Olson, Art Fletcher, columns by Nat Fleischer and Dan Daniel.

February 1961: Annual Issue—1960: Year in Review, 2,480 fighters rated, Year-end awards: Floyd Patterson (Fighter), Patterson-Johannson (Fight), Sugar Ray Robinson, Hank Casey, Paret-Thompson, '60s "oddities."

July 1962: Liston-Patterson preview by James Braddock, Tony Galento, Carlos Ortiz, Jofre-Marques, Harold Johnson, Emile Griffith.

September 1964: Patterson-Machen, Cleveland Williams, Laszlo Papp, Sonny Liston, Carlos Ortiz, three knockdown rule.

March 1967: Annual Issue—1966: Year in Review, Fighter of the Year award withheld from Muhammad Ali, Torres-Cotton (Fight of the Year), Ali-Terrell, Choinoi-McGowan, Curtis Cokes, Roger Rouse, Dick Tiger.

January 1968: Quarry-Patterson, Frazier-Doyle, Saldivar-Winstone, Garland "Rip" Randall, Emile Griffith, Georges Carpentier, all-time heavyweight tournament.

November 1968: Joey Archer, Sugar Ray Robinson, Jose Legra, Griffith-Harris, Fritzie Zivic, Lew Jenkins, overpaid fighters.

January 1972: Joe Frazier, Monzon-Griffith, Vicente Saldivar, Chris Dundee, Roberto Duran, Harry Greb, Rodolfo Martinez, Pinder-Vasquez.

May 1974: Muhammad Ali, Monzon-Napoles, Adolfo Viruet, Norton & Futch, Andries Steyn, Bobby Chacon.

August 1975: Ali-Lyle, Galindez-Elson, heavyweight contenders, Ken Norton, Eddie Gregory, Cooper-Love, Carlos Monzon.

October 1976: Joe Frazier, Archie Moore, Monzon-Valdes, Briscoe-Griffith, Gant-Gonzalez, Escalera-Yamabe, Cuevas-Espada, Ali-Inoki, Floyd Mayweather, Harry Gibbs, Ferdie Pacheco.

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ROUND ONE

WBC DOWN FOR THE COUNT?

It looks like a U.S. District Court jury might have delivered a knockout blow to the WBC by ordering a verdict in favor of German light heavyweight Graciano Rocchigiani that could cost alphabet organization upward of $30-million.

The case centered on Rocchigiani's bout with Michael Nunn in March 1998 for the vacant W 175-pound title, which had been abandoned by Roy Jones. Rocchigiani won the decision and awarded the WBC belt. Shortly thereafter, Jones changed his mind, and the WBC gave him back title, claiming that the Rocchigiani-Nunn bout was for the "interim" title.

When the case finally came to court, Rocchigiani's lawyers produced a number of docume that proved highly detrimental to the WBC's defense. Among them was the written agreement the Nunn fight, three sets of WBC ratings listing Rocchigiani as champion, and several congra tory letters from the WBC referring to Rocchigiani as world champion.

Jose Sulaiman, president of the WBC, testified under oath that these were "typographical erro Neither Judge Richard Owens nor the jury bought the laughable explanation.

"The language in the written agreement admits of only one possible interpretation," wrote Ju Owens, "the Rocchigiani-Nunn bout was for the WBC light heavyweight championship. The w 'interim' is nowhere to be found within the four corners of the document."

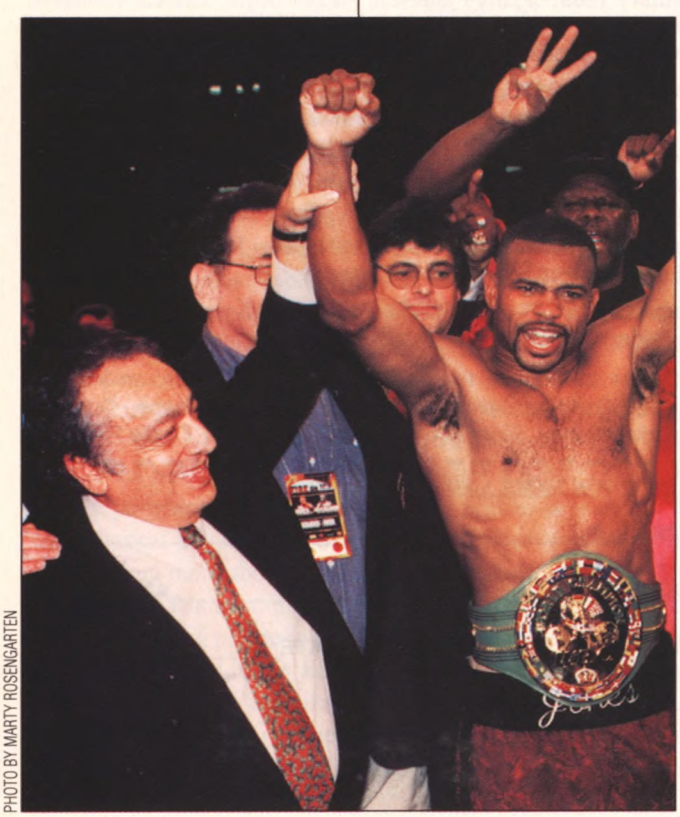


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Sulaiman, Jones, and the belt in question

The jury, which deliberated less than five hours, awar Rocchigiani $7.8-million in compensatory damages and another $ million in punitive damages. With interest, the total could exceed $ million.

The WBC has the right to appeal, but Richard Dolan, one Rocchigiani's attorneys, said that he doesn't think the punitive da ages will be overturned on appeal.

What long-term effect the gigantic judgment will have on WBC remains to be seen, but even a reduced figure could bankr the organization, which has come under fire for alleged corruption many years. It's also likely that Rocchigiani's success will encour other boxers to file similar lawsuits.

As the WBC is based in Mexico, collecting the money won't easy. But because the majority of the WBC's most lucrative bo take place in the U.S., the court could certainly confiscate future sa tioning fees. (What a pity the verdict came down after the Oscar La Hoya-Fernando Vargas fight, for which the WBC char $240,000.)

Unless the verdict is overturned, this should be the beginning the end for the WBC. It could conceivably continue to do busin outside of the United States, but without the vast sums of money g erated in this country, it would be so marginalized as to be even m irrelevant than it already is.

Boxing lovers throughout the world owe a debt to thanks Rocchigiani, his legal team, Judge Owens, and the jury.

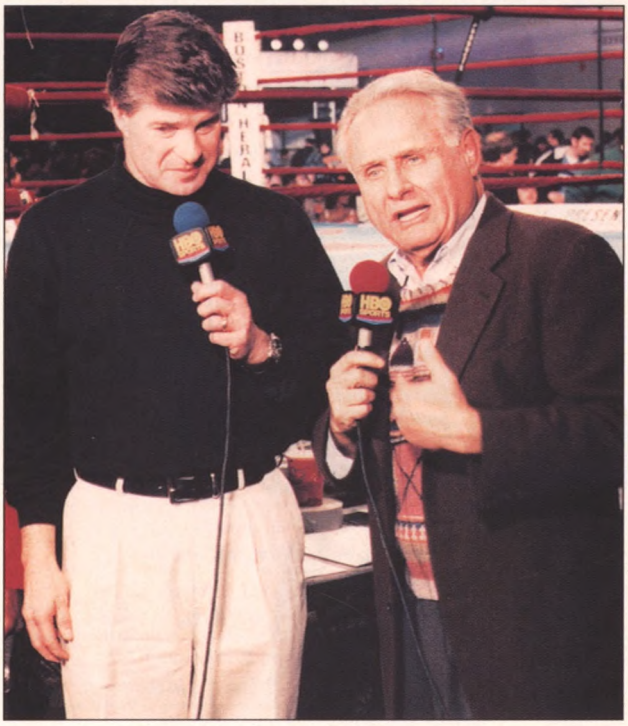
—Nigel Col

MIXED MARKS FOR THE MEN BEHIND THE MIKES

Television broadcasters are the fans' conduit to boxing, their representatives at ringside, and as such have a significant impact on their enjoyment level. Therefore, they are also subject to same sort of evaluation as the fighters, trainers, and officials they talk about on air. For our grading purposes, we've combined blow-by-blow announcers, color commentators, and studio hosts into one group.

Steve Albert (Showtime): D
Yells inappropriately and seems to know no more about boxing than when he started
Teddy Atlas (ESPN): B
Love his righteous stance, but forced delivery is wearing thin
Fran Charles (HBO): B-
*The best of the old **KO Nation** crew is making progress*
Nick Charles (Showtime): C
Nice guy who sounds like an actor reading lines
Bobby Czyz (Showtime): C+
Knows his stuff, but seems bored and just going through the motions
Mario Diaz (ESPN): D
A fish out of water
Steve Farhood (Showtime): B+
Knowledgeable, prepared, and knows when to shut up

Brian & Max: ESPN's A-Team



Lamps & Larry: Two of the best

George Foreman (HBO): F
Frequently blatantly biased and always bizarre
Jim Gray (Showtime): D-
"Please do not be rude."
Max Kellerman (ESPN): A-
Contagious enthusiasm has pumped new life into the game
Brian Kenny (ESPN): A
A serious journalist who loves the sport and does his homework
Jim Lampley (HBO): A
Articulate blow-by-blow man is a touch of class
Scott LeDoux (ESPN): B+
Gruff, no-nonsense delivery and dry sense of humor works for us
Rich Marotta (FOX SportsNet): A-
Insightful, dependable, and knows what he's talking about
Larry Merchant (HBO): A
Literate king of the old school
Sean O'Grady (FOX SportsNet): C-
Likeable goof who seldom says anything insightful
Bob Papa (ESPN): A-
Look out, Lamps; this guy is gaining on you
Emanuel Steward (HBO): A
If only he had enough time to work every fight
Joe Tessitore (ESPN): B
Hot prospect works well with different partners
Barry Tompkins (FOX SportsNet): B+
Smooth, highly reliable pro

—The Editors

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESU
9-8-02	Atilla Levin W 10 Ross Puritty	FOXSN	h	C-	C+	C+
The guy that trained Muhammad Ali is working with Levin; anyone else find that weird?						
9-13-02	Julio Diaz W 10 James Crayton	ESPN2	l	B-	C+	C
Crayton outworked over the distance? No way!						
9-14-02	Kevin Lear KO 6 Kirkor Kirkorov	Show	jl	C-	C+	C+
Lear too strong, too good, too everything for bloodied, battered Kirkorov						
9-14-02	Wayne McCullough KO 4 Johannes Maisa	Show	f	B-	C-	C+
Somewhere, right now, McCullough is shadow boxing						
9-14-02	Nate Campbell KO 3 Daniel Alicea	PPV	jl	C+	B+	B+
Campbell looks like the real thing; we'd love to see him against Casamayor or Freitas						
9-14-02	Miguel Cotto W 10 John Brown	PPV	jw	B-	B-	D+
This wasn't pretty, but has anyone ever looked good against Brown?						
9-14-02	**Oscar De La Hoya KO 11 Fernando Vargas**	**PPV**	**World jm**	**A+**	**A**	**A**
Welcome back, Oscar; it's been a while						
9-20-02	Ray Oliveira KO 9 Saul Duran	ESPN2	w	C+	C	C+
That's the last time Duran apologizes for anything ever						
9-20-02	Juan Lazcano KO 6 David Armstrong	Telef	l	B	C-	C
If he keeps this up, Lazcano will have 1,700 fights by the time he gets a title shot						
9-22-02	Lou Savarese KO 5 Tim Witherspoon	FOXSN	h	C-	B	C+
Let's hope the next time we see Terrible Tim it's in the corner of a guy he's training						
9-27-02	Cruz Carbajal KO 4 Danny Romero	ESPN2	b	B-	B-	B
Romero is to Johnny Tapia as Peter Scolari is to Tom Hanks						
9-28-02	Jorge Paez KO 8 Juan Macias	Telef	l	D+	B+	C+
Who was that old, bald chick in the long skirt and what has she done with Jorge Paez?						
9-28-02	Anthony Farnell W 12 Ruben Groenewald	Show	m	C-	B+	B+
Farnell gets his revenge in grueling, fast-paced struggle						
9-28-02	Ricky Hatton W Disq. 2 Stephen Smith	Show	jw	B-	D+	D
Hatton-Micky Ward anyone?						
9-29-02	Jeremy Williams KO 9 Gilbert Martinez	FOXSN	h	C	D+	C+
With every comeback victory, Williams moves a step closer to getting knocked out by top-12 guy						
10-4-02	Mike Stewart W 10 Mike Davis	ESPN2	jw	C-	C-	B+
The scores were ridiculous, but the right guy won and it was a heck of a fight						
10-4-02	Kassim Ouma KO 11 Darrell Woods	ESPN2	jm	B	C+	C+
Ouma rolls on; how about a match against Tokunbo Olajide?						
10-5-02	Jerson Ravelo W 8 George Walton	Show	sm	C+	C+	C+
Ravelo impresses with unanimous win, but a stoppage would've impressed a lot more						
10-5-02	Saul Montana KO 3 China Smith	Show	h	D+	B+	C+
First time we can recall a fighter named after his chin						
10-5-02	Ruslan Chagaev Tech. Draw 3 Rob Calloway	Show	h	C	B	D-
What do you expect when the referee's wearing a mullet?						
10-5-02	Mohammad Abdullaev KO 1 Juan Lopez	Show	w	C+	B	B+
Abdullaev superb; we, too, would like to see him against Ricardo Williams						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

VARGAS ON THE JUICE?

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Fernando shows off his physique at the weigh-in

An otherwise enormously successful superfight promotion had a dark cloud cast over it when Fernando Vargas failed a routine postfight urinalysis following his stirring junior middleweight title bout with Oscar De La Hoya in Las Vegas. A urine sample provided by Vargas, who lost to De La Hoya by 11th-round TKO, tested positive for stanozolol, the same steroid that cost sprinter Ben Johnson his gold medal and 100-meter world record in the 1988 Olympics.

Hours after the news of the positive test broke, Vargas released a statement vehemently denying knowingly taking steroids. He said that if the initial test results were accurate (results of a second urine sample had not yet been received as of press time), someone had to have given steroids to him without telling him. Vargas said he was aware that the Nevada State Athletic Commission would test for steroids and said everyone in his camp was made aware as well.

If the commission finds Vargas guilty of using the banned anabolic steroid, he will face a hefty fine and punishment, chairman Luther Mack said. Two mixed martial artists tested positive for steroids earlier in 2002. Josh Barnett of the Ultimate Fighting Championships was stripped of his heavyweight title and suspended for six months. Rick Roufus, a part-time boxer competing in a martial arts discipline called K-1, has not faced a disciplinary hearing yet.

Mack said Barnett's punishment should not be used as a barometer to determine how the commission might deal with Vargas.

"No way—[Vargas' punishment] would be much harsher than that. That's not close," Mack said. "What [Barnett] did was an insult to our inspectors. What Vargas did is an insult to the state of Nevada and boxing people everywhere."

Vargas wrote a letter to Marc Ratner, executive director of the NSAC, professing his innocence and pledging to get to the bottom of the issue. He pointed out that after having been taken to the hospital immediately upon leaving the ring, he could have avoided the test that night, but went on his own. He said that is not the action of a guilty man.

"I could easily, if I had wanted to, [have] avoided the drug test that evening since I was taken to the hospital before the drug test was taken," Vargas wrote. "I actually went out of my way to get the drug test taken after I was released … I hope you will take this as evidence that I cooperated fully with the Commission and had no reason to believe that a positive drug test could result."

Vargas' strength and conditioning coach, John Philbin, quit on the night of the fight, saying he had lost influence with the fighter. He said that Vargas began paying more attention to nutritionist Mazan Ali, who was providing Vargas with meals as well as supplements and vitamins.

Vargas accused no one, but suggested someone working for him must have given him the steroids. In his statement, he said he ate whatever was given to him because he trusted those he had hired.

"I had professionals in my camp and I was given many nutritional supplements each day," Vargas wrote in his letter to Ratner. "I took what I was given and did not think to question, because I relied upon and trusted those around me.

"I knew that steroids were banned and that there would be testing. The others responsible in my camp knew the same. I am upset beyond words that a positive test has been received."

—Kevin Iole

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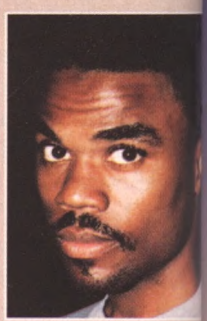
OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Thorne: In a prickly predicament

He's announced his retirement once before, but perhaps legendary undefeated two-division titlist **Ricardo Lopez** means it this time. "Finito" indicated in mid-September that 2002 would be his final year of fighting, with a formal announcement to follow in late-October ... In mid-September, **Josie Harris**, the mother of one of lightweight champ **Floyd Mayweather's** children, alleged that a vehicle owned by "Pretty Boy Floyd" tried to run her vehicle off the road in Las Vegas. According to Mayweather's attorney, **Richard Wright**, the fighter was sitting in the passenger seat, not driving. Mayweather, who received a six-month suspended sentence in March for domestic violence and misdemeanor battery, will do mandatory jail time if convicted of another crime in the next seven years ... News broke in early-September that former Boxing Writers Association of America President **Chris Thorne** had been expelled from the organization after he admitted to embezzling at least $31,000 during his tenure as president from '97 to '01. What legal action would be taken against Thorne, the longtime boxing writer for the *Newark Star-Ledger*, had not yet been determined as of press time ... Middleweight champ **Bernard Hopkins'** former trainer, **Bouie Fisher**, filed a breach-of-contract suit against "The Executioner" in early-September, alleging that Hopkins underpaid him a total of $255,000 for their final three fights together. Fisher's suit seeks "in excess of $75,000," plus 10 percent of all future Hopkins purses ... Former welterweight titlist **Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis** suffered a bizarre injury in late-September. After a workout, Lewis went to retrieve his bottle of coconut water from the locker room freezer and, in the words of manager **Nelson Fernandez**, "the glass bottle exploded." Lewis needed nine stitches in the palm of his left hand, and was expected to be on the shelf for four to six weeks ... In mid-September, the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee approved a bill establishing a national boxing commission called the United States Boxing Administration. Before the bill becomes law, approval is also needed from the House of Representatives and from **President Bush** ... Former 140-pound beltholder **Terronn Millett** scored a major victory outside the ring in late-September when a jury awarded him $595,000 in a civil rights suit. Millett claimed that a Berkeley, Missouri, police officer stopped his without probable cause in May '99 and, using excessive fo injured Millett's left hand, forcing him to postpone a title defens We reported last issue that featherweight **Augie Sanchez** was de a boxing license by the Nevada State Athletic Commission. In e September, Sanchez responded by suing the NSAC ... Fl **"Jumbo" Cummings**, best known for fighting to a draw with **Frazier** in '81, was sentenced to life in prison in mid-September being convicted of stealing $250 and a VCR from a fast food res rant. Cummings, 52, was sentenced under Illinois' "three strik law, which requires a life term after three convictions. He had pr ously done time for armed robbery and murder ... **Jerry Boy** longtime trainer and cutman who gained fame as a writer in '99 the release of the boxing short-story collection *Rope Burns* under pen name, **F.X. Toole**, died in early-September at the age of Boyd, of Redondo Beach, California, died from complications lowing heart surgery ... Ending on a positive note: Promoter **King** and retired great **Felix Trinidad** donated a $750,000 fire to the Fire Department of New York a few days before the one- anniversary of the 9-11 attack. Not surprisingly, King took the opp tunity to try to coax "Tito" out of retirement, but his efforts appar ly fell on deaf ears.



Millett: Beats the cops in cou

THE PUNCHLINES

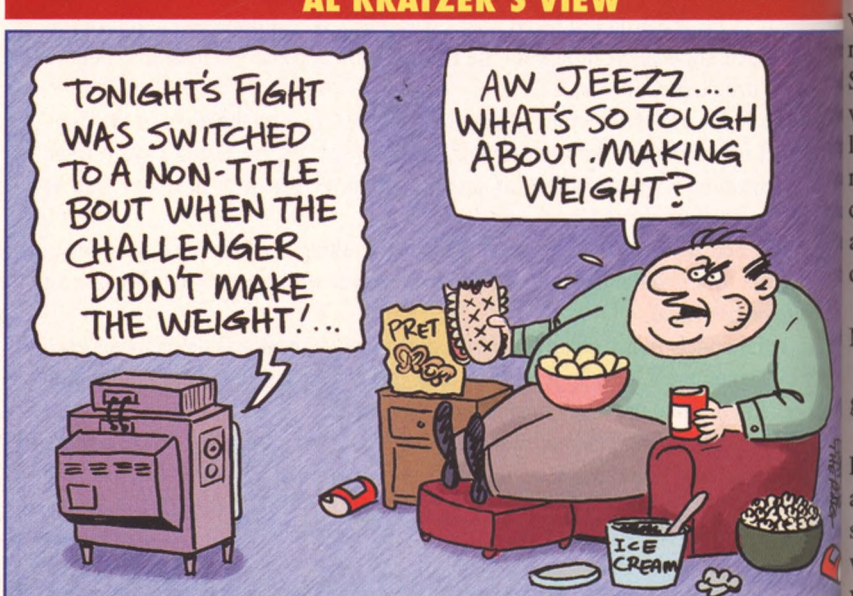
"F___ him! Let him leave. Tell him to pay me the money he owes me and he can go find a new promoter."

—Bob Arum, on Diego Corrales, who declined to make his comeback fight on Telefutura for $25,000, as Arum wanted him to

"They would kill me in Puerto Rico if I rooted for Oscar."

—Millie Corretjer, Puerto Rican wife of Oscar De La Hoya, on a proposed rematch between her husband and Felix Trinidad

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended October 7, 2002)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight
2. **ROY JONES** Light Heavyweight
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Featherweight
4. **VERNON FORREST** Welterweight
5. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Junior Middleweight
6. **KOSTYA TSZYU** Junior Welterweight
7. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Lightweight
8. **LENNOX LEWIS** Heavyweight
9. **ERIK MORALES** Featherweight
10. **SHANE MOSLEY** Junior Middleweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes, but the January 2003 title tilt between IBF boss Vassiliy Jirov (currently number one) and James Toney (currently fifth) could shake up the division.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: As we went to press, world 175-pound champion Roy Jones was tentatively scheduled to challenge WBA heavyweight titleholder John Ruiz (currently ranked fifth at heavyweight). Should Jones defeat Ruiz and also wish to continue campaigning as a light heavyweight, THE RING would rank him among the heavyweight contenders and maintain his status as THE RING'S light heavyweight champion.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Kassim Ouma (currently sixth) added another win to his record by stopping Darrell Woods, but it wasn't significant enough to advance him.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes, but as Ray Oliveira is now fighting at 147 pounds, lower-level contenders would be wise to look over their shoulders.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Unranked Ricky Hatton continues to fatten his record, but hasn't beaten anyone good enough to allow him to crack the ratings.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes, but expect a lot of them following important November bouts between RING champion Marco Antonio Barrera and fourth ranked Johnny Tapia, and RING junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala and our number-one featherweight contender Erik Morales.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: If Ayala succeeds against Morales and decides to stay at 126 pounds, THE RING'S junior featherweight title will become vacant.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Cruz Carbajal (10th last issue) jumps to number eight following his TKO of two-division former titleholder Danny Romero. Genaro Garcia (eighth last issue) departs due to his loss to Jose Rojas at 122 pounds. Streaking Pete Frissina debuts at number 10.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Although Ricardo Lopez (currently number one) has set the date for the official announcement of his retirement (October 25), he remains in the rankings until after that date.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Daniel Reyes (ninth last issue) and Kermin Guardia (eighth last issue) trade places due to Reyes' activity and Guardia's idleness.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes, but current leader Bernard Hopkins is in jeopardy. See this issue's feature dedicated to this subject *(page 22)*. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended October 7, 2002

Juan Lazcano maintained his ranking at lightweight with a stay-busy win over David Armstrong

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors
Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 40-2-1 (31)

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 39-1 (36)
2. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 35-2 (20)
3. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
Fairburn, GA 38-5-2 (25)
4. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 41-3 (36)
5. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 38-4-1 (27)
6. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Port Jefferson, NY 28-2-3 (16)
7. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 35-4 (29)
8. **KIRK JOHNSON**
Canada 32-1-1 (23)
9. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 49-4 (43)
10. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 31-1 (30)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: OSCAR DE LA HOYA
Whittier, CA 35-2 (28)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 44-3 (25)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 22-2 (20)
3. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 54-5 (36)
4. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 26-2-1 (20)
5. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 38-2 (35)
6. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 17-1-1 (12)
7. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 45-4 (29)
8. **ALEX BUNEMA**
Dallas, TX 20-3-2 (12)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 33-8-1 (18)
10. **SANTIAGO SAMANIEGO**
Panama 36-6-1 (29)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
Mexico 55-3 (39)

1. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 41-1 (31)
2. **NASEEM HAMED**
England 36-1 (31)
3. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 60-12 (27)
4. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 52-2-2 (28)
5. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 39-2 (31)
6. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 38-5-1 (24)
7. **FRANKIE TOLEDO**
Paterson, NJ 42-6-1 (17)
8. **JULIO PABLO CHACON**
Argentina 44-2 (31)
9. **LEHLO LEDWABA**
South Africa 33-2-1 (22)
10. **WILLIAM ABELYAN**
Glendale, CA 20-4-1 (11)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA
Ft. Worth, TX 34-1 (12)

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 34-2-1 (25)
2. **BONES ADAMS**
Henderson, KY 41-5-3 (19)
3. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 45-3-1 (32)
4. **WILLIE JORRIN**
Sacramento, CA 28-0-1 (12)
5. **OSAMU SATO**
Japan 26-1-2 (15)
6. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 28-1-1 (13)
7. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
Mexico 30-2-2 (21)
8. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 33-3 (24)
9. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 21-2-1 (12)
10. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 18-0 (14)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 25-0-1 (22)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 38-1-1 (27)
3. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 52-2 (26)
4. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 28-3 (26)
5. **EIDY MOYA**
Venezuela 15-2 (8)
6. **ADAN VARGAS**
Mexico 37-4-1 (23)
7. **HERIBERTO RUIZ**
Mexico 26-1-2 (13)
8. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 22-11-1 (18)
9. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 22-3-2 (13)
10. **PETE FRISSINA**
Tarpon Springs, FL 26-3-1 (15)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 31-0 (27)
2. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 42-12-1 (28)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 28-2 (20)
4. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 17-0 (14)
5. **JAMES TONEY**
   Ann Arbor, MI 65-4-2 (42)
6. **EZRA SELLERS**
   Washington, D.C. 25-5 (23)
7. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 18-1-1 (17)
8. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 47-4 (23)
9. **ALEXANDRE GUROV**
   Ukraine 32-3-1 (27)
10. **JORGE CASTRO**
    Argentina 120-8-3 (84)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 47-1 (38)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 20-1 (17)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 47-0 (37)
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA 21-2-1 (7)
4. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 43-3 (29)
5. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX 42-7-1 (24)
6. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France 42-2-2 (7)
7. **DAVID TELESCO**
   Port Chester, NY 26-3 (21)
8. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 30-1 (20)
9. **LOU DEL VALLE**
   Bronx, NY 31-3-1 (21)
10. **GEORGE JONES**
    Paterson, NJ 18-1 (13)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 34-0 (27)
2. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 28-0 (6)
3. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 29-4-1 (26)
4. **ERIC LUCAS**
   Canada 36-4-3 (13)
5. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 25-1-1 (18)
6. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 38-9 (27)
7. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 41-1 (35)
8. **MANUEL SIACA**
   Puerto Rico 16-4 (15)
9. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 26-1 (11)
10. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
    Australia 15-1 (12)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 41-2-1 (30)

1. **HARRY SIMON**
   Namibia 23-0 (17)
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 33-2-1 (24)
3. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 32-1 (29)
4. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
   Italy 21-0 (7)
5. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 33-4 (24)
6. **TITO MENDOZA**
   Panama 27-4 (20)
7. **SERGEY TATEVOSYAN**
   Russia 16-3 (12)
8. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France 32-6-1 (20)
9. **RODNEY JONES**
   Lafayette, LA 26-3 (16)
10. **ERLAND BETARE**
    France 35-7-2 (16)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: VERNON FORREST
Atlanta, GA 35-0 (26)

1. **RICARDO MAYORGA**
   Nicaragua 24-3-1 (22)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 26-3 (18)
3. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 31-0 (25)
4. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana 21-1-1 (19)
5. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 37-4 (26)
6. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 21-10 (16)
7. **CORY SPINKS**
   St. Louis, MO 30-2 (11)
8. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 37-1 (23)
9. **DANNY PEREZ**
   El Cajon, CA 27-2 (17)
10. **JAWAID KHALIQ**
    England 19-1-1 (12)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 29-1-1 (23)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 49-3 (29)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 28-1 (21)
3. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 27-1-1 (16)
4. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA 38-11 (27)
5. **DIOBELYS HURTADO**
   Miami, FL 35-2-1 (23)
6. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 34-6 (28)
7. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX 43-5-2 (17)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 31-1 (10)
9. **BEN TACKIE**
   Ghana 24-3 (15)
10. **OMAR WEIS**
    Argentina 35-4-3 (16)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 28-0 (20)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 46-5-1 (42)
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 34-2-1 (16)
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA 35-0 (14)
4. **LEONARD DORIN**
   Canada 21-0 (7)
5. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 31-2-1 (24)
6. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN 40-6-1 (29)
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 35-0 (22)
8. **RAUL BALBI**
   France 48-6-1 (33)
9. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ**
   Mexico 48-5-1 (33)
10. **COLIN DUNNE**
    England 38-1 (26)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 32-0 (29)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 27-1 (17)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 37-2 (26)
4. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 21-1 (5)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 36-2-1 (33)
6. **PHILLIP NDOU**
   South Africa 28-1 (27)
7. **SIRIMONGKOL SINGMANASSAK**
   Thailand 38-1 (22)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 37-3-1 (23)
9. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 27-1 (15)
10. **NATE CAMPBELL**
    Jacksonville, FL 22-0 (20)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 27-2-1 (8)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 23-0 (23)
3. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 24-0-1 (18)
4. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 22-3-1 (11)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines 46-4-2 (31)
6. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 21-1 (13)
7. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela 35-9-3 (19)
8. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 28-3-1 (18)
9. **IN JOO CHO**
   Korea 18-2 (7)
10. **LUIS BOLANO**
    Colombia 36-0 (28)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 45-2 (25)
2. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 31-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 26-0 (20)
4. **MZUKISI SIKALI**
   South Africa 27-4-2 (16)
5. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa 20-2 (13)
6. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand 42-1 (14)
7. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 12-1-2 (8)
8. **PETER CULSHAW**
   England 22-1-1 (12)
9. **GERSON GUERRERO**
   Mexico 25-4 (19)
10. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
    Argentina 12-0-1 (7)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico 50-0-1 (37)
2. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 31-2-1 (20)
3. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 30-3-1 (22)
4. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 28-1 (23)
5. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 25-2 (12)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 19-2-2 (11)
7. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 24-2 (13)
8. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan 24-1 (12)
9. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico 66-8-4 (30)
10. **ZOLANI PETELO**
    South Africa 17-3-2 (9)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 27-1-1 (17)
2. **MIGUEL BARRERA**
   Colombia 19-0-2 (11)
3. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 21-1-1 (18)
4. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 48-2-2 (17)
5. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 18-2-1 (10)
6. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan 22-8 (5)
7. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines 31-7-2 (22)
8. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 28-1 (22)
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 33-2 (20)
10. **KHULILE MAKEBA**
    South Africa 16-1 (9)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

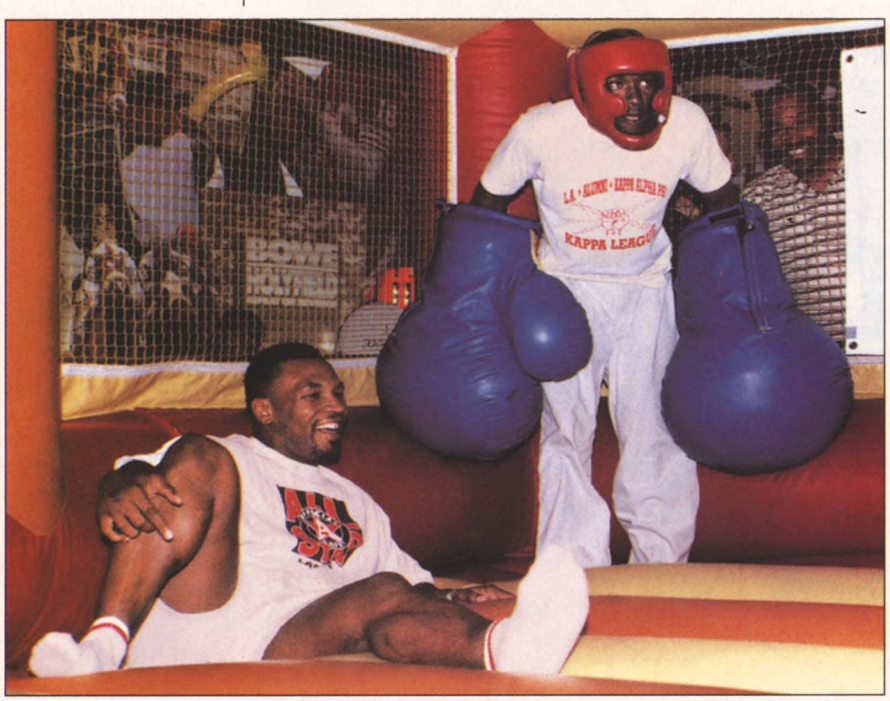
WARNING: CONTAINS DEMOGRAPHIC VIOLENCE

Here's some surprising news for those of us who'd been led to believe that boxing's fan b was eroding faster than the Atlantic coastline. According to the results of a recent reti survey, THE RING's readers aren't all a bunch of fossils who peer at these words thro Coke-bottle glasses and hope for the day (if they're still around) when the magazine puts out edition with extra-large print. In fact, about half of the page-turners are under the age of 30.

What a relief it is to learn that there are so many readers out there who wouldn't even k what old Madison Square Garden is, let alone be able to recall how tasty the orange drink wa the Nedick's stand in the arena's lobby. Wow, there's actually a sizable fan following that doe even remember Roberto Duran as a lightweight, Sugar Ray Leonard as an Olympian, or Geo Foreman as a guy with hair.

It's great that boxing has tapped into that key demographic (ages 18-35) coveted by advertis TV executives, and magazine publishers. (Notice how *Sports Illustrated* has been dumbed dow compete with *ESPN The Magazine*.) But the challenge ahead will be engendering loyalty from a new breed at a time when so much other sports entertainment is clamoring for its attention. W boxing has to do is photocopy the playbook of the major sports, and even some minor ones, follow their blueprints for keeping the young male fan in the fold.

That means dressing up the game with some new fan-friendly gimmicks. Boxing has alre swiped a few good ideas from a other sports, like shooting firew from the arena roof after a ma event and having a studio sh anchor its weekly "big-game" co age. Now, here are some more id to consider:



Tyson takes a tumble in interactive trampoline match

(Warning: Purists and/or bo lovers over the age of 35 read no ther, lest you increase your risk heart attack and stroke.)

•More elaborate celebrations you think about it, boxing celeb tions usually consist of little m than the victor riding around the on the shoulders of his handle Thus, unifying a title with a p turesque kayo produces pretty m the same postfight scene that cap ing a four-round decision in on pro debut does.

Well, boxing needs to let its w ners cut loose a little, sportsmans

be damned. That dusty old rule, about going to the farthest neutral corner after a knockdown, needs to be junked. When a guy floors his foe, he should be allowed to dance around the prone victim, taunting and mocking him and imploring him to get up, a la Muhammad Ali vs. Sonny Liston. If a fighter wins a bout, he should get to grab the ring announcer's microphone and let his boasts of greatness be heard all the way up in the cheap seats.

And the fans should be encouraged to be part of the fun, too. College football crazies routinely charge the field, tear down the goalposts, and carry them away after a big win. Following a favorable outcome in a fighter's hometown, let's say Paul Spadafora retaining his crown in Pittsburgh, fans ought to be encouraged to storm the ring, cut down the ropes, and carry the ringposts home as souvenirs.

•Alternate uniforms: Hockey teams have the third sweater. Baseball clubs have the second cap. Boxing can have Mike Tyson in baby blue trunks and knee socks.

•Different playing surfaces: Tennis tests its competitors' versatility by making them play on clay, grass, hardcourts, and carpet. Boxers should be forced to fight not just on canvas, but also on a trampoline, on a giant roped waterbed, and—so that we can finally force all those annoying to stand and trade punches—on the beach. That's right, boxing on sand. Let's see them paint a beer logo on that.

•Club seats: These seats would be so close to the action that the ticketholder could rest his or her glass of Dom Perignon on the ring apron. The back of the ticket would contain a warning similar to the ones that caution baseball fans about flying bats and balls. This one would say that management isn't responsible if patrons at a David Tua fight are hit by a flying Michael Moorer.

•Weather girls: The fistic equivalent of crack meteorologist Jillian Barberie, who shows off her storm front while reporting on the weather conditions at NFL ballparks for FOX. Boxing's barometric bimbos could let us know how the heat and humidity might affect the combatants and the stadium crowd that came to see them. And if it's an indoor bout? Hell, then they could tell us how much precipitation to *not* expect during the main event. Would we complain?

•Mascots: Picture a guy dressed as a lightning bolt for "Thunder" Gatti, the Michelin Man leading cheers for Butterbean, someone in a spermatozoa costume representing Evander Holyfield, a dude in a skeleton suit psyching up Bones Adams, a jailbird with a ball and chain around his leg leading Tyson's walk to the ring, etc. Bernard Hopkins, of course, wouldn't need a mascot. As we saw when he entered the ring in a hood for his shootout with Felix Trinidad, "The Executioner" serves as his own.

•Contests: The NBA has the slam dunk contest, and baseball features the home run derby. Boxing could answer with Kirk Johnson and Andrew Golota competing to see who can put the deepest dent in a protective cup.

•Last ups: In baseball, the home team bats last. In hockey, the home team gets the final line change. In boxing, the underdog should be permitted to launch one punch per round after the bell. Something has to liven up those Roy Jones fights.

•Bellybutton cams: Nobody in the fight game wears a helmet or sits in a race car, so there really is no other place to put the camera. Stick one in Arturo Gatti's navel and we should get some great closeups of Micky Ward's left hook to the body. Potential problem: How to get the camera to stay in an outie.

•Giveaway days: The Antonio Tarver skull wax would be popular, as would the Lennox Lewis instructional acting video, and the do-it-yourself tattoo kit that promises to make you look like Angel Manfredy in just 45 short weeks. The Fernando Vargas bobble-head doll would be a bigger hit, however, if it didn't rekindle bad memories of how Vargas' noggin looked when he was pinned in the corner by Oscar De La Hoya in the 11th round.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Hopkins is his own mascot

•Sleep-ins: Earlier this year, the Chicago White Sox invited fans to bring sleeping bags and spend the night on the field at Comiskey Park after a game. Those who watched the stars and then slept under them were treated to baseball movies on the Jumbotron and taped nighty-nite messages from the players.

Boxing nuts could be invited to spend the night in Holyfield's sprawling Georgia mansion (offer limited to only the first 15,000 fans in attendance). Or female fans could join De La Hoya at a giant snooze-a-thon in L.A.'s Staples Center and afterward buy T-shirts that read, "I slept with Oscar De La Hoya." Those in the crowd who couldn't fall asleep would be shown highlights of Vernon Forrest-Shane Mosley II.

As for the suggestion that fans sleep on the sidewalk outside Madison Square Garden, well, it's been rejected because there are already enough people doing that.

•Interactive exhibits: People attending the NBA Finals can shoot baskets in a "fan's fun zone." At tennis' U.S. Open, they can have their serve clocked by radar. And if the fight game embraces this idea, fans at superfights will have their own interactive playland. In boxing's new exhibit, fans could attempt to tease their hair like Don King's, have the speed of their uppercut measured, and see if they can hurl a ring stool farther than Zab Judah. As if that's not enough, they can also drill one of those punching bags that's designed to bounce right back up when you knock it down. As a special treat, the one that looks like Judah will fall down twice from just one punch. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Aren't there enough snakes in boxing already? Middleweight Maurice Brantley may have charmed this snake well enough to behave at the weigh-in for his September fight in Las Vegas with Shibata Flores, but he couldn't charm Flores, who wiped out the Missouri journeyman in three rounds the next day.

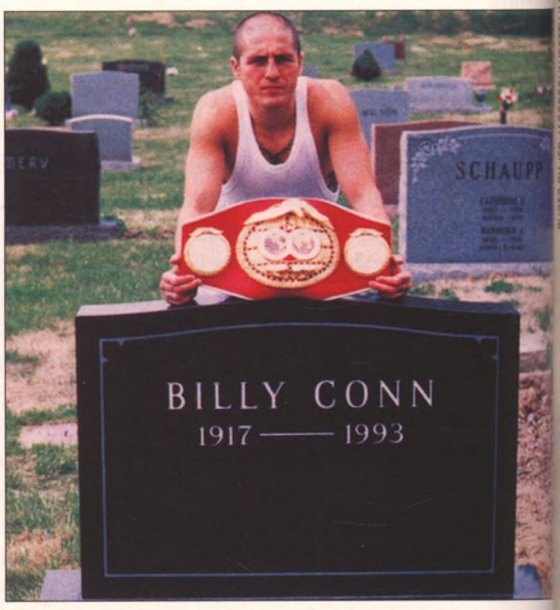


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

The tradition lives on: The original "Pittsburgh Kid," Billy Co died nearly a decade ago, but his nickname is being kept alive lightweight Paul Spadafora, perhaps the most popular fighte come out of the Steel City since Conn. Given the current mediocr of the Pirates, Penguins, and Steelers, you might say Spadafor Pittsburgh's only sports franchise that's alive and well these days

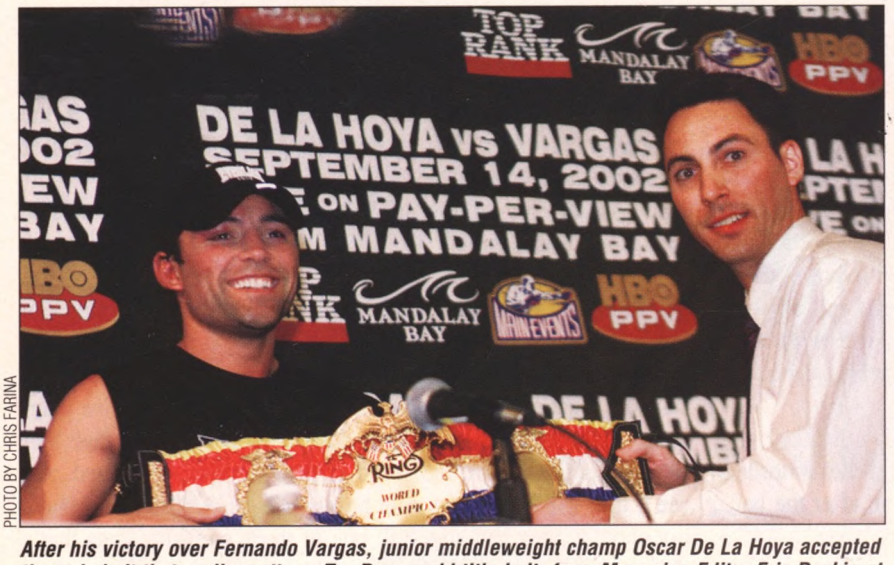
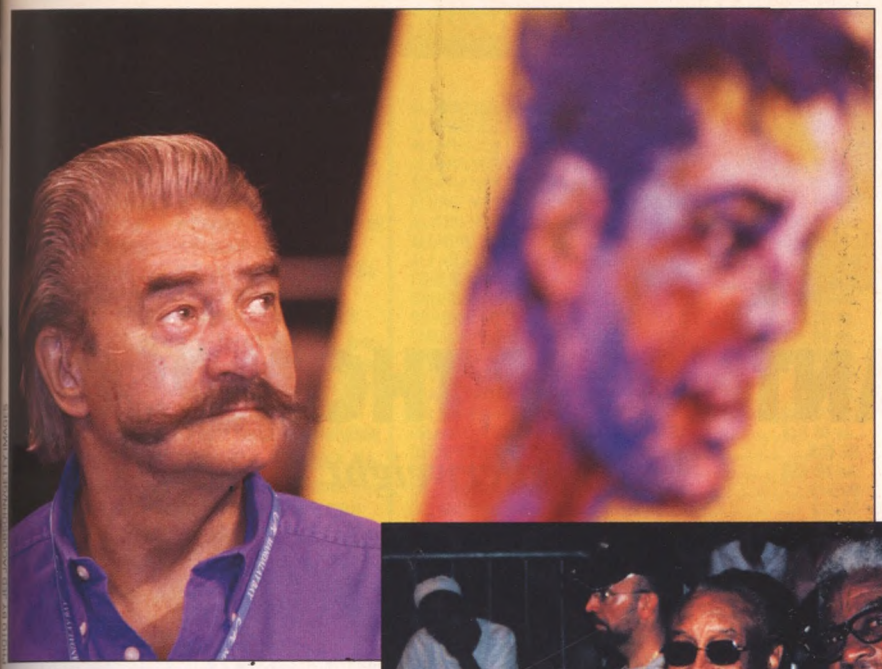


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

After his victory over Fernando Vargas, junior middleweight champ Oscar De La Hoya accepted the only belt that really matters, THE RING world title belt, from Managing Editor Eric Raskin at the postfight press conference. Maybe a little stanozolol in "The Golden Boy's" system would have made lugging the hardware around easier.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

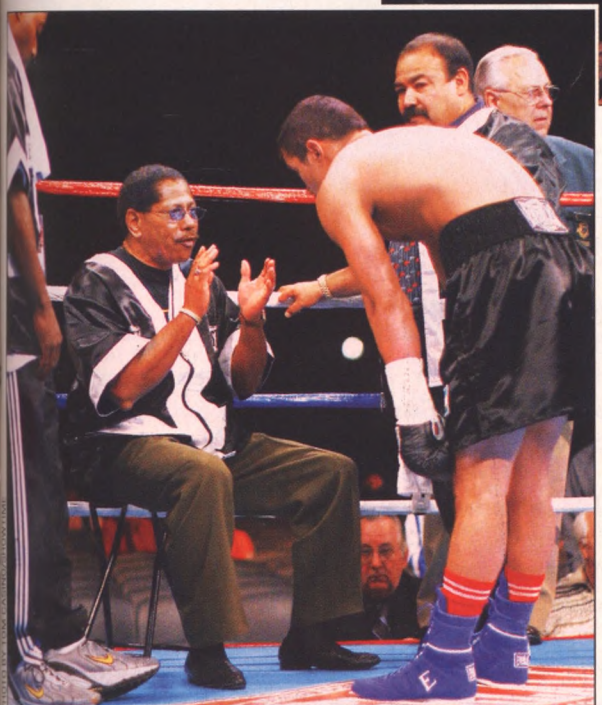
One look at the faces, and you know what fighte twin sons these are. It's a good thing for Roy Jo that his boys aren't as demanding as he is; co you imagine, when it's time for dessert, Dad tr to figure out how to divvy up the apple pie wh both kids want a 60-40 split in their favor?



Vargas wasn't able to put De La Hoya on the canvas, but Leroy Neiman had no problem pulling it off. The legendary artist stands in front of his painting hyping the "Bad Blood" showdown, which was unveiled at the weigh-in the day before the fight.

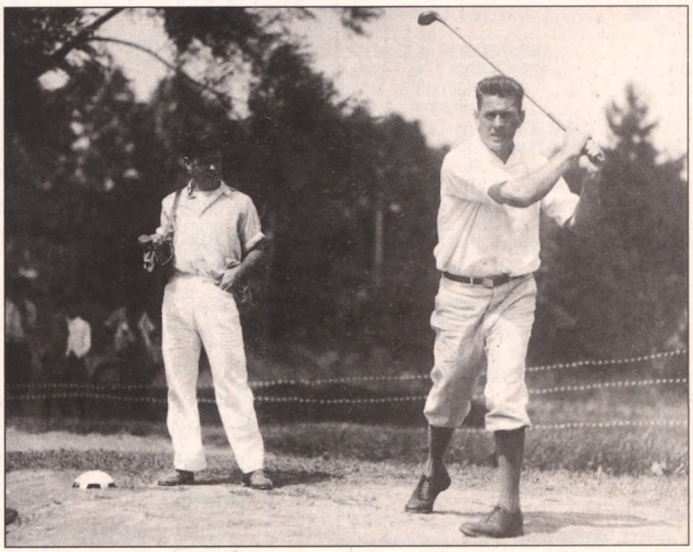
As Philadelphia sports coaches go, they don't come much better than these two, Temple Owls basketball coach John Chaney and veteran fight trainer Bouie Fisher. It's nice to see these two guys shaking hands, but let's just hope they aren't entering into some sort of handshake agreement, the dangers of which Fisher should know by now.

PHOTO BY CHARLES WILLIAMS



When a trainer starts to get up in years, sometimes he's the one who needs to rest on the stool between rounds. Veteran cornerman Kenny Adams beat junior middleweight prospect Kuvanych Toygonbayev to the stool during the young Uzbeki's October fight with Leon Pierson in Detroit, which, if nothing else, should encourage Toygonbayev to show a little more hustle getting to the corner in the future.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



How much would you pay to see these two kick the crap out of Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson? Back in the 1920s, future Hall of Famers Mickey Walker and Gene Tunney took to the links to play a less strenuous game—although it's still a bit of a strain for Walker, who somehow got stuck carrying Tunney's bag.

NEW FACES

ANTHONY THOMPSON

Welterweight

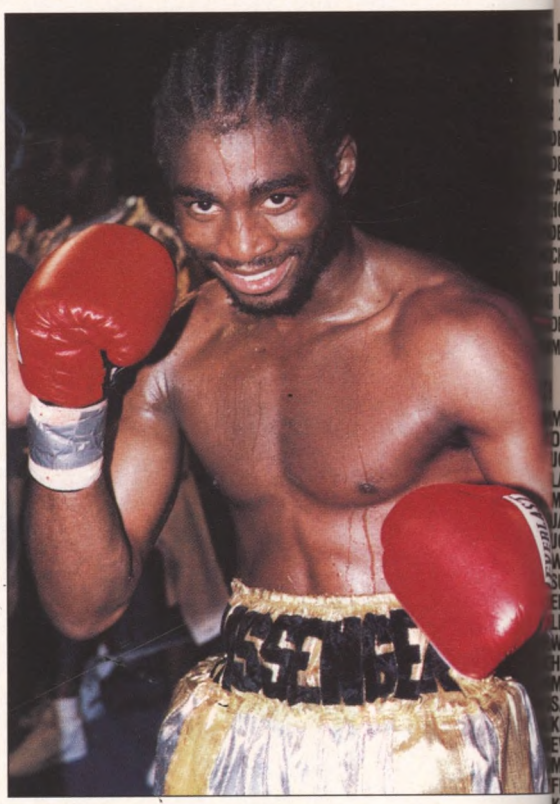
By Joe Santoliquito

PRO RECORD

2002

March 17	Elvesto Mills, Oroville, CA	KO 2
April 27	Fausto Alvarque, New York City	KO 1
May 25	Ruben Munoz, Las Vegas	W 4
June 29	Joe Christie, Atlantic City	W 4
Aug. 17	Daniel Craycraft, Atlantic City	KO 2
Sept. 8	Tommy Attardo, Lawton, OK	KO 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
6	6	0	0	4



Anthony Thompson would die a little each time something else would fail. These were his babies, a piece of him, gradually withering in front of his eyes. He was helpless, and Thompson had never been helpless in his life. The slow deterioration involved blindness, deafness, constant seizures, intravenous feeding, lumps, and finally death. One child actually died in his arms, blood trickling from her tiny mouth.

Thompson is laconic about what drives him to stay in the gym after everyone's left, working on his timing, his jab, his footwork. That's because what drives him is a subject that he, understandably, doesn't like to discuss much.

Thompson bears a burden that no psychoanalyst can cure. The pounding Thompson has endured in his life doesn't happen to most of us until we're grizzled by age and our minds are fading—if it even happens at all. Thompson is just 21, yet his life lessons came at 15 and 18, when he lost two young daughters to Zellweger syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that affects the liver, kidneys, and brain. Tragedies like that are emotionally crippling. He'd question himself all of the time and wonder, *Why me?*

Thompson carries a quiet calm now, an inner strength that tells him the worst is over, and that just surviving those two unspeakable hardships was a victory in itself. He's using these experiences as the motivational hammer toward boxing success.

The 5'11" welterweight from Philadel has forged a 6-0 (4) record. He's receive good dose of national exposure (includi *Sports Illustrated* writeup before he t turned pro), has a promotional contract Cedric Kushner, and is represented by on the more respected managers in the ga today, Cameron Dunkin. More importantly has two healthy baby boys, and a loving m er of his children in Tanisha Allen, his school sweetheart whom he's been with s they were 14.

Thompson also has a message, hence nickname, "The Messenger."

"To go through what I've been throug

(Continued on page

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POUND-FOR-POUND UP FOR GRABS

The Debate Is As Hot As Ever—For All The Wrong Reasons

By Eric Raskin

Doesn't anybody want to be the pound-for-pound king?

We're not asking who'd like to storm the beaches at Normandy here. We're not asking who's willing to work in the broadcast booth with George Foreman. We're simply asking for someone to step up and claim the most prestigious unofficial title in boxing. But from the reluctant response, you'd think we were handing out anthrax-filled envelopes to the winner.

Bernard Hopkins, Roy Jones, Marco Antonio Barrera, Vernon Forrest, and Floyd Mayweather all had golden opportunities in recent months to separate themselves from the competition in the pound-for-pound race. But for an assortment of reasons, all five of those world champions failed to do so. Meanwhile, Oscar De La Hoya and Kostya Tszyu have come through with performances we couldn't possibly criticize. But both were starting from a bit too far down the pound-for-pound list to suddenly stake a compelling claim to the top spot.

So what we're left with is a mess on the mountaintop, a snowcap with yellow stains all over it. Who's the pound-for-pound king? THE RING says it's Hopkins. But we also acknowledge that his hold on the title is growing increasingly tenuous, and that arguments in favor of quite a few other fighters can be made.

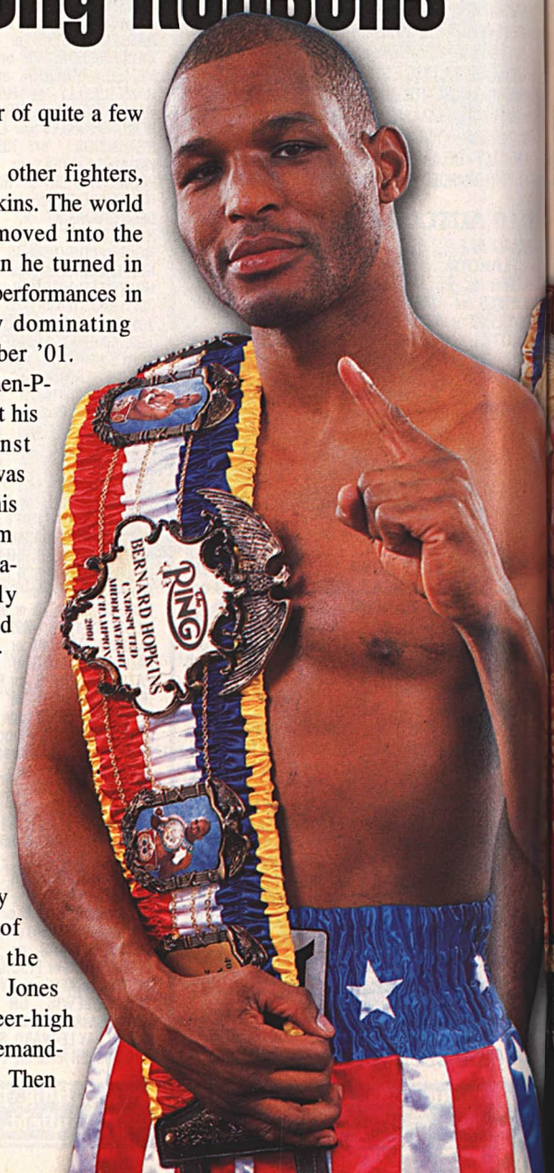
Before we get to those other fighters, though, let's focus on Hopkins. The world middleweight champion moved into the number-two position when he turned in one of the single greatest performances in middleweight history by dominating Felix Trinidad in September '01. Four months later, when then-P-4-P ruler Shane Mosley lost his undefeated record against Vernon Forrest, Hopkins was the logical choice to take his spot, and he made it seem less like a by-default coronation by comprehensively defeating Carl Daniels and setting the new record for middleweight title defenses in February.

Since then, however, "The Executioner" has seemed bound and determined to lop his own head off, killing his career momentum by stubbornly negotiating his way out of fights. An offer was on the table for a superfight with Jones worth twice Hopkins' career-high payday. Hopkins balked, demanding purse parity with Jones. Then came an offer for a three-fight deal with Showtime, including attractive fights with Harry Simon and Joe Calzaghe and an agreement to televise his mandatory mismatch with either Erland Betare or Morrade Hakkar (the names may have changed, but the anonymity remains the same). Hopkins turned down the contract. Meanwhile, Hopkins' image has suffered as he's gone through public breakups with trainer Bouie Fisher and adviser Lou DiBella, but neither of those play into his pound-for-pound ranking. What does affect his P-4-P status, however, is the fact that he's been inactive since February, with the off-putting mandatory defense still being put off as of press time.

Hopkins was contacted by THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins in late-September to be made aware of the fact that if he didn't fight soon, his pound-for-pound position was likely to change. Hopkins' response, basically, boiled down to three words: "I don't care." Needless to say, the door has been left open for a new number one to take over for Hopkins—who was by no means a unanimous pound-for-pound choice among experts and fans in the first place.

That's because when those experts and fans are polled as to who they think belongs at number one, pound-for-pound, the name that generally dominates the balloting is Jones. The argument in his favor, however, is based purely on speculation—he *looks* like the best, and even though he hasn't proven his greatness in what seems like eons, he's the most dominant champion in the game. That last part is true enough, but against what caliber of opposition has he been dominant? He hasn't faced a fellow pound-for-pounder since back in the year *Pulp Fiction* was released, when he beat James Toney to a pulp and subsequently made fighting dangerous opponents a thing of fiction. *Maybe* Jones still is the greatest boxer on earth, but not even his most ardent supporters can say with 100 percent certainty that he would excel at the top level these days, with his 34th birthday nearing.

For evidence of how one's dominance against sub-par opposition doesn't translate into true dominance, we need look no farther than the case of Mosley. Following his narrow victory over De La Hoya that shot him to the top of the pound-for-pound list, Mosley looked truly sensational against three no-hopers: Antonio Diaz, Shannan Taylor, and Adrian Stone. Compare those fighters with the last three challengers Jones has faced. Julio Gonzalez, like Diaz, is a tough, hungry Mexican-American with modest skill. If anything, Diaz, at the time, was better and more deserving, and Mosley mowed him down in six rounds, while Jones let Gonzalez last the 12-round distance. Next for Jones was Glen Kelly, like Taylor an obscure Australian with a glossy record and a ridiculous number-one alphabet rating. Kelly, who turned out to be far more pa-



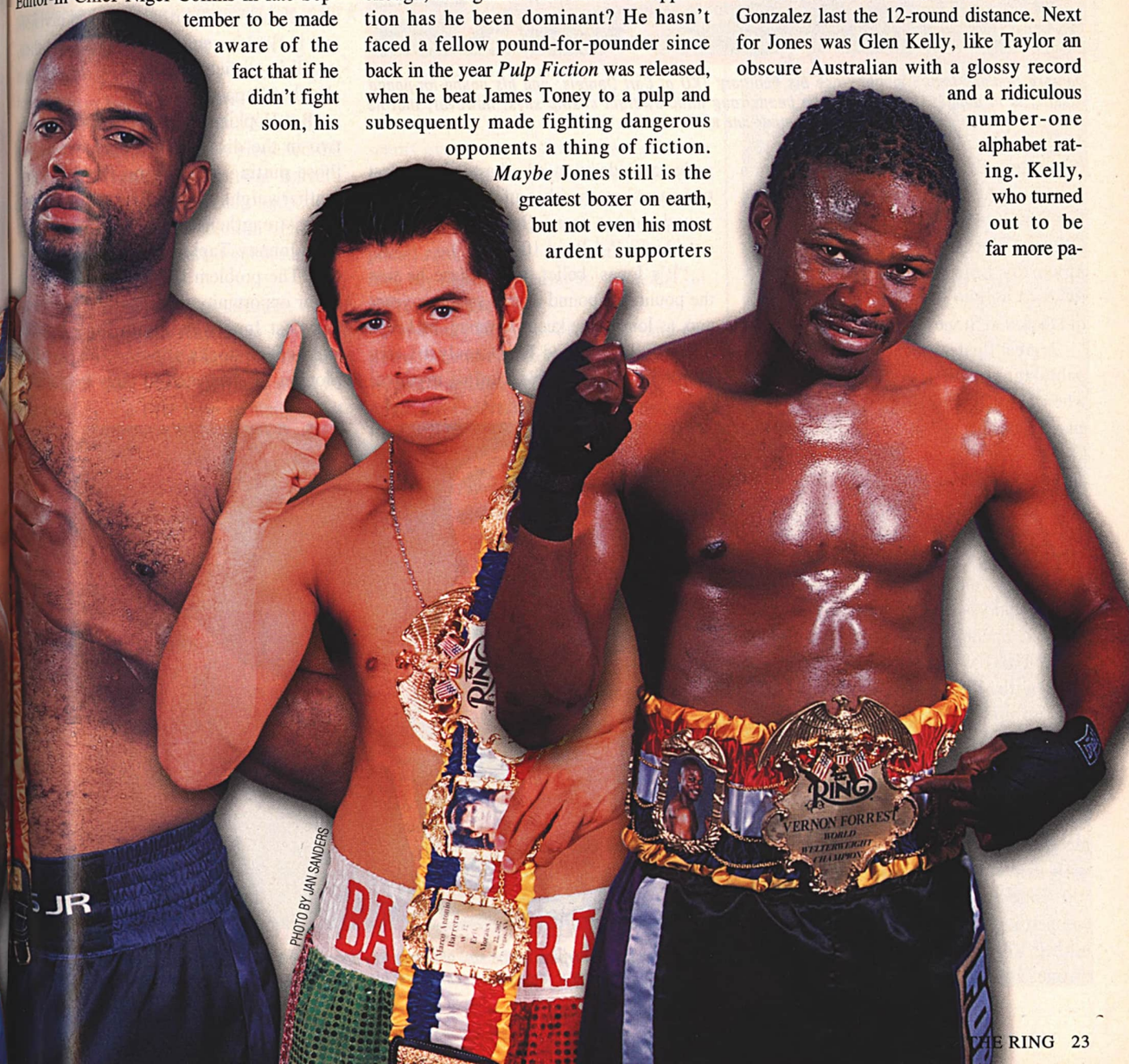


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Bernard Hopkins hasn't fought since his February TKO of Carl Daniels, and his pound-for-pound ranking is in danger as a result. The headstrong middleweight champ says, however, that he doesn't care if he's removed from the number-one spot.

thetic than Taylor, was knocked out by a nobody in his next fight—in three rounds less than it took Jones to do it. Then came Clinton Woods, like Stone a game but unworthy Englishman. Yet Jones took twice as long to get rid of him as Mosley did to pound Stone.

A great fighter will always look unstoppable against far less talented foes. But when Mosley stepped up to face an elite fighter in Forrest, he lost. Can anyone say for sure that the same wouldn't happen to Jones if there was a light heavyweight equivalent to Forrest out there? There isn't such a fighter right now, unfortunately, but at least Jones could've sought out the best available opponents, instead of the worst HBO would let him get away with. When you fight the best competition around, you sometimes lose, as De La Hoya, Trinidad, and Mosley have learned in meeting the challenges of fellow pound-for-pound talents in recent years. But since struggling with Eric Harding in September '00, Jones has avoided credible competition at every turn, diminishing his claim to the P-4-P throne. Jones is the only fighter under consideration who hasn't in the last two years beaten either a fellow pound-for-pound entrant or a fellow titleholder just outside the P-4-P top 10.

"It's Jones' belief that because he was the pound-for-pound champ so many years ago, as long as he keeps winning, he keeps that title," observed HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "But in this kind of mythical opinion honor, it matters how you perfo and who you perform against. It's not ordinary championship that you keep you keep winning."

Because of Hopkins' inactivity, how er, Jones does have a very realistic cha to reclaim the mythical crown in his n fight. As of press time, negotiations w still ongoing for Jones to move up heavyweight and fight John Ruiz. A w there, over a decent fighter who outwei him by some 40 pounds, would ma Jones' claim to the number-one sp almost irrefutable. And even if the li heavyweight king prices himself out that fight, he insists his next challen will be Antonio Tarver, the legitim number-one contender at 175 pounds. beating Tarver, Jones will have succeed against the most worthy foe in his divisi and if Hopkins still hasn't fought by th it will be difficult to rate The Executio ahead of Rappin' Roy.

But Hopkins and Jones aren't the o two in the discussion. Foremost amo those putting pressure on them is wo featherweight champ Barrera, who m have strengthened his claim with a w over Johnny Tapia by the time you re this. The problem is Barrera had an ev better opportunity to strengthen that cl this past June when, with both Hopki and Jones' stocks slipping, he met Er Morales in a rematch to their magnific

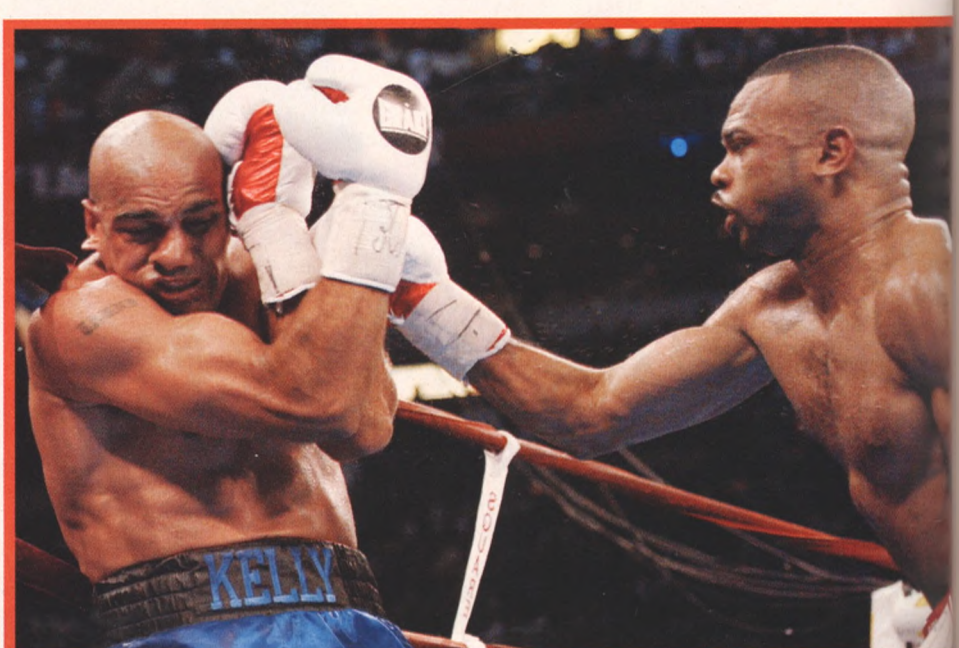


PHOTO BY HERB SCHARFEN/SHARF

Pitiful Australian Glen Kelly is typical of the sort of fodder Roy Jones has feasted on in recent years. If Jones fi either John Ruiz or Antonio Tarver, though, he could quiet his critics and reclaim The Ring's pound-for-pound tit

Vernon Forrest blasts Shane Mosley with a jab en route to an easy victory in their first fight. The question remains: Is the welterweight king really that good, or does he just have Mosley's number?

war of two years earlier. A convincing win there, coming on the heels of brilliant performances against then-pound-for-pounder Naseem Hamed and former beltholder Enrique Sanchez, might have propelled the Mexican veteran to the top. But Barrera fought surprisingly cautiously and could only eke out a disputed decision win over Morales, leaving him stalled out at number three.

Forrest was in a similar situation when he fought Mosley in a rematch in July. The undefeated welterweight king had crashed the top five from out of nowhere when he beat Mosley the first time around, but it was hard to place him much higher than that due to the "fluke factor." Forrest had never proven himself against a first-rate opponent before, so he had to illustrate that beating Sugar Shane was no accident before receiving consideration for the top spot. What better way to prove that than by fighting Mosley again? Well, Forrest won again, proving the first time was no fluke. But the win was as tight and ugly as Cedric Kushner in spandex. It didn't leave the impression that Forrest is the most gifted fighter on the planet, but rather that he just has the style to make Mosley look ordinary. Two wins over Mosley count for something—that's why Forrest is number four. But he probably won't be number one until he defeats another elite fighter.

Interestingly, Forrest, like Hopkins, has a very apathetic attitude toward his position on the list, which may explain why he was concerned just with winning against Mosley, and not with looking good doing it.

"That pound-for-pound stuff is really a popularity contest. Us boxers don't really care about it," Forrest told THE RING. "It seems everybody has their own rules for making pound-for-pound lists, and they change the rules from week to week. I'm not really concerned about my pound-for-pound ranking. I'm concerned about winning my fights, defending my title, and fulfilling my legacy."

The only other undefeated pound-for-pound entrant besides Forrest is Mayweather, and he, like Forrest and Barrera, might have ascended to the top if he hadn't been so disappointing in his last fight. With an absolutely awesome stoppage of Diego Corrales and a reasonably impressive win over Jesus Chavez on his recent resume, former junior lightweight titlist Mayweather moved up to 135 in April '02 with pound-for-pound glory in his sights. But when he met Jose Luis Castillo for the lightweight title, Mayweather suddenly showed signs of mortality. Maybe he was undersized at lightweight, maybe his shoulder really was injured, maybe Castillo's a P-4-P contender himself—whatever the reason, Mayweather struggled, and the decision he won was very debatable. It's hard to hand a fighter the pound-for-pound title when the majority of the public thinks he lost his most recent fight.

Certainly the most consistent high-level performer over the last two years or so has

(Continued on page 26)

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Pound-For-Pound

(Continued from page 25)

been Tszyu, the junior welterweight world champion. He muscled his way onto the P-4-P list with his upset second-round yo-yo job on Zab Judah in November '01, and his immaculate display against Ben Tackie in May '02 was an eye-opening reminder of the Australian's boxing proficiency. But can a guy who wasn't on the list until a year ago, and who's never beaten anybody who was on the list at the time he fought them (Judah was the closest) rocket immediately to the top? Tszyu has climbed to number six, but with struggles against B-plus fighters like Sharmba Mitchell and Oktay Urkal still so fresh in our minds, he'll need to keep the consistency going a few more fights before boxing's ponytail-for-ponytail best assumes a different P-4-P distinction.

A former RING pound-for-pound king, De La Hoya reversed his downward momentum with a magnificent knockout of Fernando Vargas this past September to become the world junior middleweight champ. But before "The Golden Boy's" legions of fans get too carried away with the significance of the achievement, they must remember that it was De La Hoya's first fight in 15 months and his first win over an elite opponent since he edged out Ike Quartey 3½ years ago. Another win like it—say, against former conqueror Mosley next May—and there could be argument for Oscar to return to the top. to go instantly from number 10 (where was at the end of his inactivity) to num one, just for beating someone who wa on the list at all, would be a serious stret

Junior welter champ Kostya Tszyu put on a clinical display against tough Ben Tackie in May helping advance his P-4-P rating. Tszyu was unranked until a year ago, but his impressive win streak has pushed him to number six on THE RING's list.

In looking at the entire group of can dates, what you see are a lot of strong n ners-up, but no clear-cut pound-for-pou pole sitter. Merchant, who has Hopkin number one but expects that to chang The Executioner hasn't fought by the of the year, believes, in fact, that leav the top spot vacant wouldn't be the wo idea in the world.

"The pound-for-pound title is basica a case right now of, here's a title, co and get it," said Merchant. "These thi are judgment calls. Nobody is wrong this moment. I know Emanuel Stew thinks Barrera is number one, and I ca really argue against that. There's a qu tion mark at the top, and maybe that qu tion mark will become an exclamat point in the next six months or so."

Let's hope so. The pound-for-pou list may not mean as much now—in t day of RING championships and the b fighting the best on a fairly regular basi as it did a few years ago, but it's still a topic of debate for fans and writers ali It's just that the debate is much more sa fying when you reach your conclusions the basis of positive achievement, rat than by process of elimination.

PHOTO BY ROBERT MORA/GETTY IMAGES

Oscar De La Hoya sends Fernando Vargas to the floor with a left hook in the 11th round of their recent junior middleweight battle. De La Hoya could become a two-time RING pound-for-pound champ if he follows up with another significant win in his next fight.

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HOLYFIELD vs. BYRD

Whoever Wins, Don King Comes Out On Top

By Tommy Deas

At first glance, Evander Holyfield and Chris Byrd have a lot in common. Both were Olympic medal winners at lighter weights who crashed the heavyweight division when most observers thought they were too small to compete with today's super-sized big men. Both kept fighting and winning, eventually convincing the skeptics that they were, indeed, able to hold their own with the big fellows.

Look a little closer, however, and you will see that Holyfield and Byrd are really nearly opposites. The most obvious difference is that Byrd is a southpaw, while Holyfield is a right-hander cast from the most orthodox of molds. Even more telling is their different approaches to the fight game.

Holyfield is a born warrior who throws himself into the heart of combat with any foe, willing to trade punches until the issue is decided. Byrd is a speed merchant who likes to pile up points and avoid contact until the final bell rings in hopes of walking away unblemished with a decision victory.

Those contrasts will be on display when Holyfield and Byrd clash for the IBF heavyweight title vacated by Lennox Lewis. The fight is part of promoter Don King's proposed four-man elimination tournament, with the winner expected to fight the winner of a proposed bout between WBA titleholder John Ruiz and light heavyweight champion Roy Jones.

Whoever emerges after the three-fight series, King will be the big winner if he can pull it off. Boxing's most visible promoter learned long ago that he who controls the heavyweight division controls boxing, and King is once again staking his claim to be known as the sport's most commanding figure.

The heavyweight series gives King a chance to step off the sidelines and into the glamour division's spotlight once again. While he has maintained promotional interest in Ruiz, the WBA titlist's low profile and penchant for hard-on-the-eyes fights has not given King a real stake in boxing's big-money division. But with Lennox Lewis settling into the autumn of his championship reign, King sees a chance to create a heavyweight with public appeal by pitting four diverse fighters against each other in a format that will allow one to emerge with two alphabet belts.

How important is this move to King? It was apparently worth a million dollars to the promoter, because that's how much he boasts he paid Lewis (along with a vehicle) to vacate the IBF belt when Lewis showed reluctance to face mandatory contender Byrd in the wake of his wipeout of Mike Tyson.

Even though Lewis is recognized as the true heavyweight champion far and wide, King can command power by controlling two of the belts through promotional ties to the tournament winner. If and when Lewis retires, which many expect him to do within the next year, King will once again have a tight reign on the future of the heavyweight division. The idea behind the elimination series is to create a heavyweight the public will recognize, so future heavyweight hopefuls will have to go through King once again.

Holyfield and Byrd took different paths to the upper echelons of the heavyweight decision. Holyfield burst on the scene as a hard-luck loser in the Olympic light heavyweight semifinals when he was disqualified for landing a knockout blow

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA

Byrd's wide points victory over David Tua in August 2001 was a good example of how effective the southpaw's style can be, even against a vicious-hitting adversary. First, he lures Tua into the ropes and makes him miss (above). Then Byrd lashes out with light but accurate counters (below).

on the break. He immediately rose to prominence as a cruiserweight in the professional ranks, dominating that division before beefing up to join the heavyweights. He quickly knocked off a couple of established contenders to make a splash in the division.

Byrd fought in the 165-pound middleweight division in the Olympics, and turned pro to little fanfare at about the same weight. By his fourth fight, however, Byrd had gained 40 pounds, and he quietly built his record against trialhorses and fringe contenders before he started to forge a name for himself as he raised the level of opposition.

Furthermore, there's the issue of age. Holyfield will turn 40 this fall, making him eight years older than Byrd. In ring years, however, Holyfield is an ancient veteran of hard-nosed combat, while Byrd's style has allowed him to avoid the kind of wear and tear that usually begins to show when a fighter passes into his fourth decade of life.

Holyfield has been King's most prominent heavyweight since Tyson bolted his promotional stable, but Holyfield's indecisive three-fight series with Ruiz failed to excite anyone. Holyfie won a narrow decision in t first bout with Ruiz, and th lost a close verdict in t rematch. The ugly rubb match ended in a draw, a though most thought Ho field deserved to win, didn't look any less washe up than he had in the pre ous two bouts.

That all changed in Ju '02 when Holyfield, 38-5 (25), turned in his best pe formance in years with a su prising technical decisi defeat of Hasim Rahman, a once-upon-a-time heav weight champ who borrow Lewis' title belts for a fe months. The man who knoc ed out Lewis in a stunni upset before being dispos of easily in a rematch fou out first-hand that Holyfie is far from finished. Ho field ripped into him wi vicious combinations and got the better most every exchange before Rahman t tired from the bout with a huge lump his head.

Byrd, 35-2 (20), seemed on his way as a heavyweight contender after he w beaten by Wladimir Klitschko last year

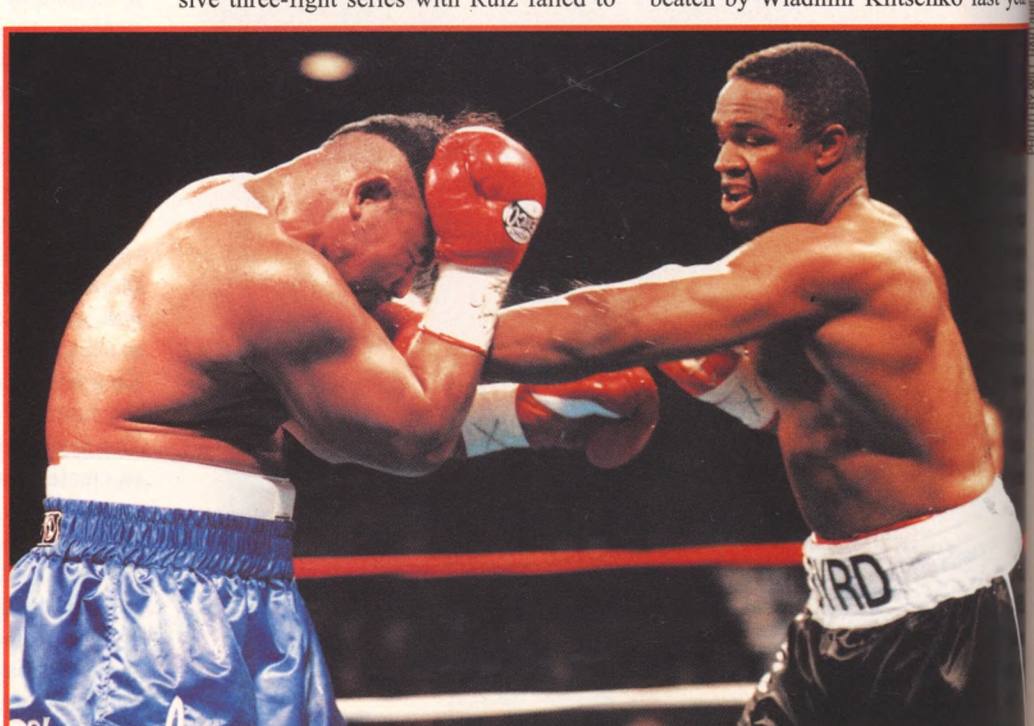
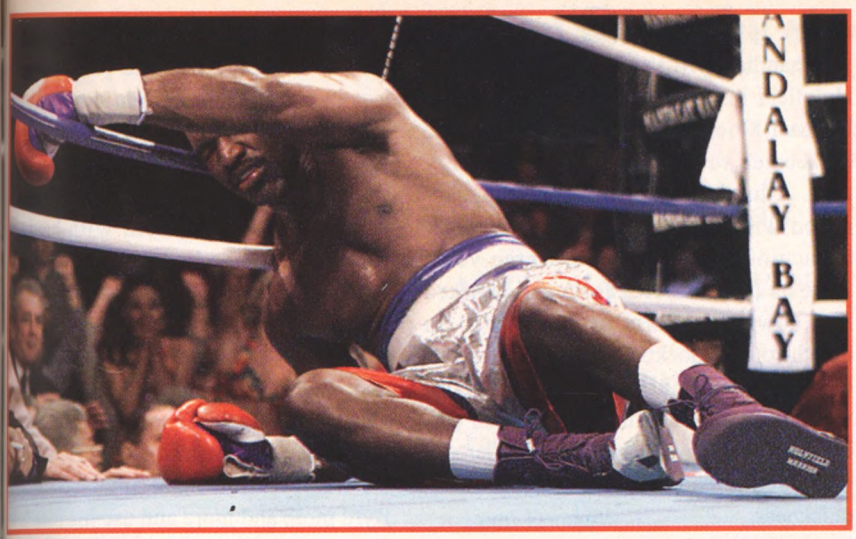
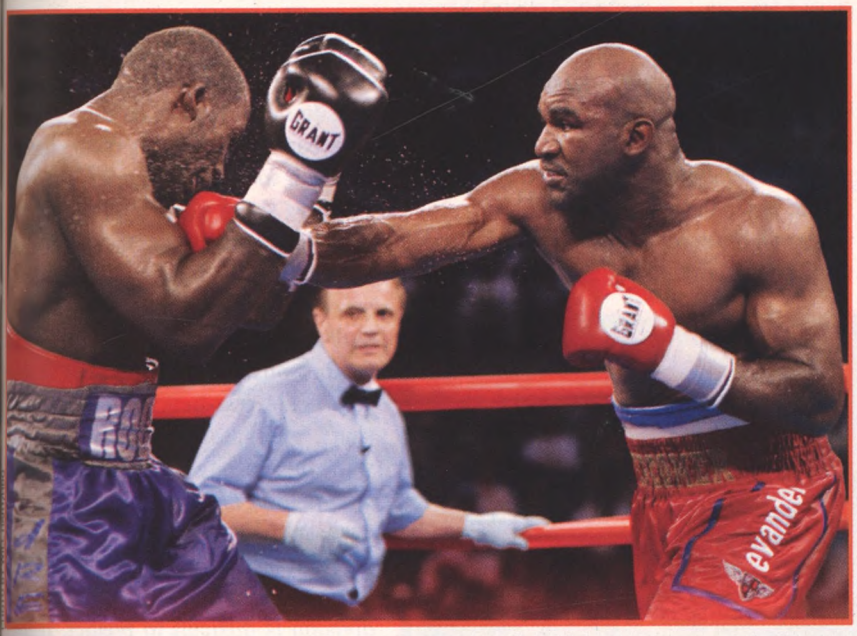


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO





Holyfield's career looked all but over when John Ruiz decked and decisioned "The Real Deal" in their second fight (above). But Commander Vander showed he still has something left by drawing with Ruiz in their third encounter and hammering ex-champ Hasim Rahman into defeat in June 2002 (below).

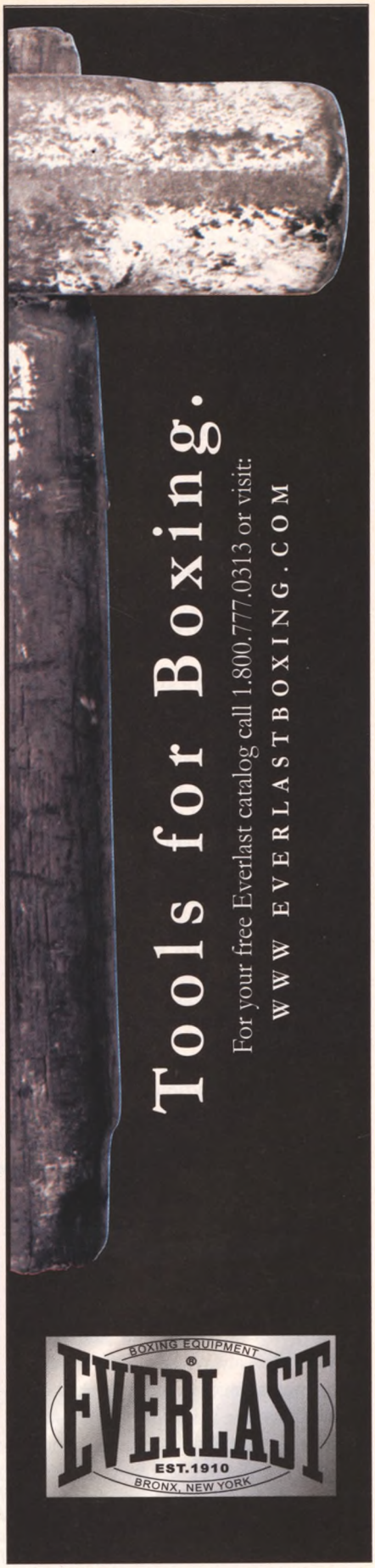
Germany. The loss destroyed the momentum gained when Byrd notched a victory over Klitschko's brother, Vitali, when the latter quit in the 10th round with a shoulder injury despite holding a lead on the scorecards. But just when it seemed Byrd wasn't going to be able to cut it with the big boys, he bounced back with a one-sided decision win over David Tua to vault himself to the top of the IBF rankings.

Those two impressive victories by two fighters who seemed on their way out put them in position to battle for the vacant IBF crown in what figures to be an interesting fight. Just how entertaining it will be, however, remains to be seen.

The difficulty presented by Byrd goes beyond his left-handed stance. Byrd retains the speed that made him a world-class middleweight as an amateur, and he likes to throw feather-fisted flurries and then spin out of the way before his opponent can mount a counter assault. He also has a fondness for covering up on the ropes and then lashing out with a blinding combination, much like Ali in his heyday.

Holyfield's task will be to force the action and find a way to engage Byrd in a real fight instead of a series of quick exchanges that are over before "The Real Deal" can do any damage. The former undisputed champion never lacks for aggression, but he must find a way to dictate the terms of battle and make Byrd pay a price for his quick-strike assaults.

(Continued on page 32)



Holyfield-Byrd

(Continued from page 31)

At this stage of his career, Holyfield's age is a hard factor to figure. He looked shopworn in his three clinch-filled fights with Ruiz, whose style seems suited as much to the pro wrestling ring as it does to pugilism. Although Holyfield showed his old form in spots, he seemed off-target with most of his combinations and was rarely able to sustain any momentum on offense.

Holyfield was able to summon a much better effort against Rahman, showing that he still has something in the tank. His punches looked crisp, and he was able to inflict visible damage whenever he landed cleanly. Whether he can raise his game to that level again, much less improve upon it, will be a key factor in deciding the outcome of his match with Byrd.

Holyfield bears little resemblance to the fighters who have given Byrd the most trouble. The Klitschko brothers were simply far bigger than the 6'1", 215-pounder. Byrd was unable to consistently get inside their reach or deal with their power, although he escaped with a win against the lesser of the Eastern European brothers.

Byrd's other career loss came by knockout to Ike Ibeabuchi, a talented but troubled fighter with both power and boxing skills. The tank-like Ibeabuchi simply waded in when Byrd set up along the ropes and pole-axed him with a haymaker.

One thing Holyfield does have in common with those three fighters is his tremendous strength. The Klitschko brothers are both as brawny as they are big, and they seemed to be able to move the smaller Byrd around whenever the need arose. Ibeabuchi is built much lower to the ground, but was still able to wade through Byrd's salvos with much more success than Tua enjoyed. Holyfield has always been able to muscle his way around. He never looked out of his class when matching strength with bigger foes like Riddick Bowe, George Foreman, and Lewis, and he completely had his way in bulling Tyson around the ring in their two fights.

On the other hand, Holyfield's resume gives little insight as to how he will handle Byrd's wily southpaw ways. Holyfield lost a majority decision to lefty Michael Moorer in 1994 in a fight where he seemed to fight through low-energy ebbs. After that bout, Holyfield was diagnosed with a heart condition that later miraculously disappeared. Three years later, he faced Moorer again and knocked him down five times on the way to an eighth-round knockout. Moorer, however, bears little resemblance to Byrd. A converted right-hander whose best punch was his jab, Moorer was more of a plodder and possessed none of Byrd's elusiveness or quickness.

While Holyfield figures to still carry the same strength and power that took him to the top of the heavyweight division, the Byrd fight will probably be decided by his timing. Commander Vander misfired time and time again in his 36 rounds with Ruiz, but found Rahman to be an easy target. Byrd will present a much more difficult puzzle, so Holyfield's speed and accuracy will be put to the test.

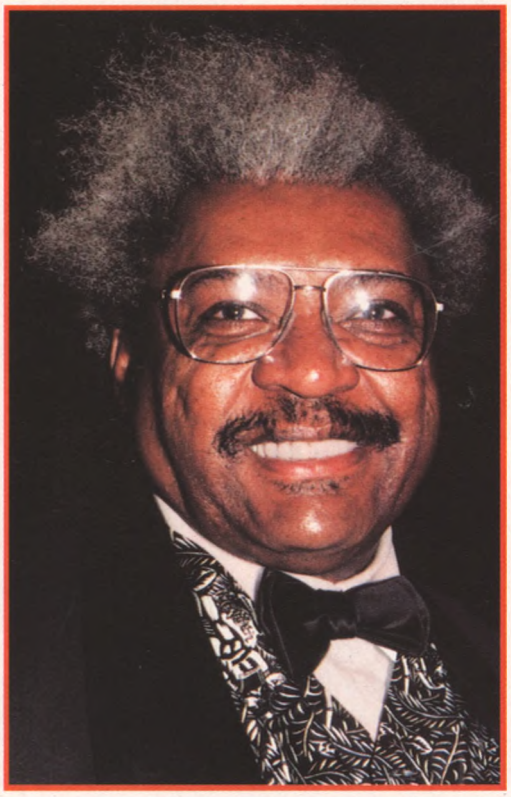
For all his awkwardness, Byrd has been very consistent throughout his career. Slower opponents like Bert Coop Eliecer Castillo, and Tua simply look lost in trying to track him down, and will employ the same tactics again Holyfield. Look for Byrd to come spinning and moving to his right, constantly presenting Holyfield with hard- counter angles as he hunts and pecks way to an early points lead through first five or six rounds.

By the seventh or eighth, Holyfield unbridled aggression will begin to pay dividends, as he is able to catch Byrd alo the ropes and do solid work to the bo He will begin to maul and wrestle w Byrd more and more and use his muscle keep the younger man where he wa him. Holyfield will rally through the m dle rounds and start to pull even on t scorecards.

The outcome will be decided in the l two or three rounds, when Byrd's yo begins to show. He will be able to take action back to the center of the ring a score with some quick flurries, punctua by a few shots solid enough to sn Holyfield's head back. As with many Byrd's fights, the bout will be difficult score and the judging may be controv sial as fans debate how many of h feather-duster blows it takes to eq Holyfield's less-frequent, but more so shots. The guess here is that Byrd w win the late exchanges and ke Holyfield at a safe distance as he pu away to a close decision victory.

How such an outcome will affect t long-range health of the heavyweig division is difficult to predict. If Jon beats Ruiz in the other half of King tournament, the showdown between t defensive-minded Byrd and "Reluct Roy" just might turn into the dull track meet in heavyweight histor Which only goes to prove yet again t what's good for Don King isn't necessa ily good for boxing. But providing w bear in mind that Lewis is the tr heavyweight champion, Holyfield-By is still a worthy and intriguing mat one in which the winner is bound to an undersized overachiever who has co sistently proved the critics wrong. A there's nothing the matter with that.

Tommy Deas is a sportswriter f The Tuscaloosa (Alabama) News and regular contributor to this magazine.



The person with the most to gain from the upcoming Holyfield-Byrd match is Don King. Not only does the Hall of Fame promoter have both fighters under contract, the bout will increase King's power in the all-important heavyweight division.

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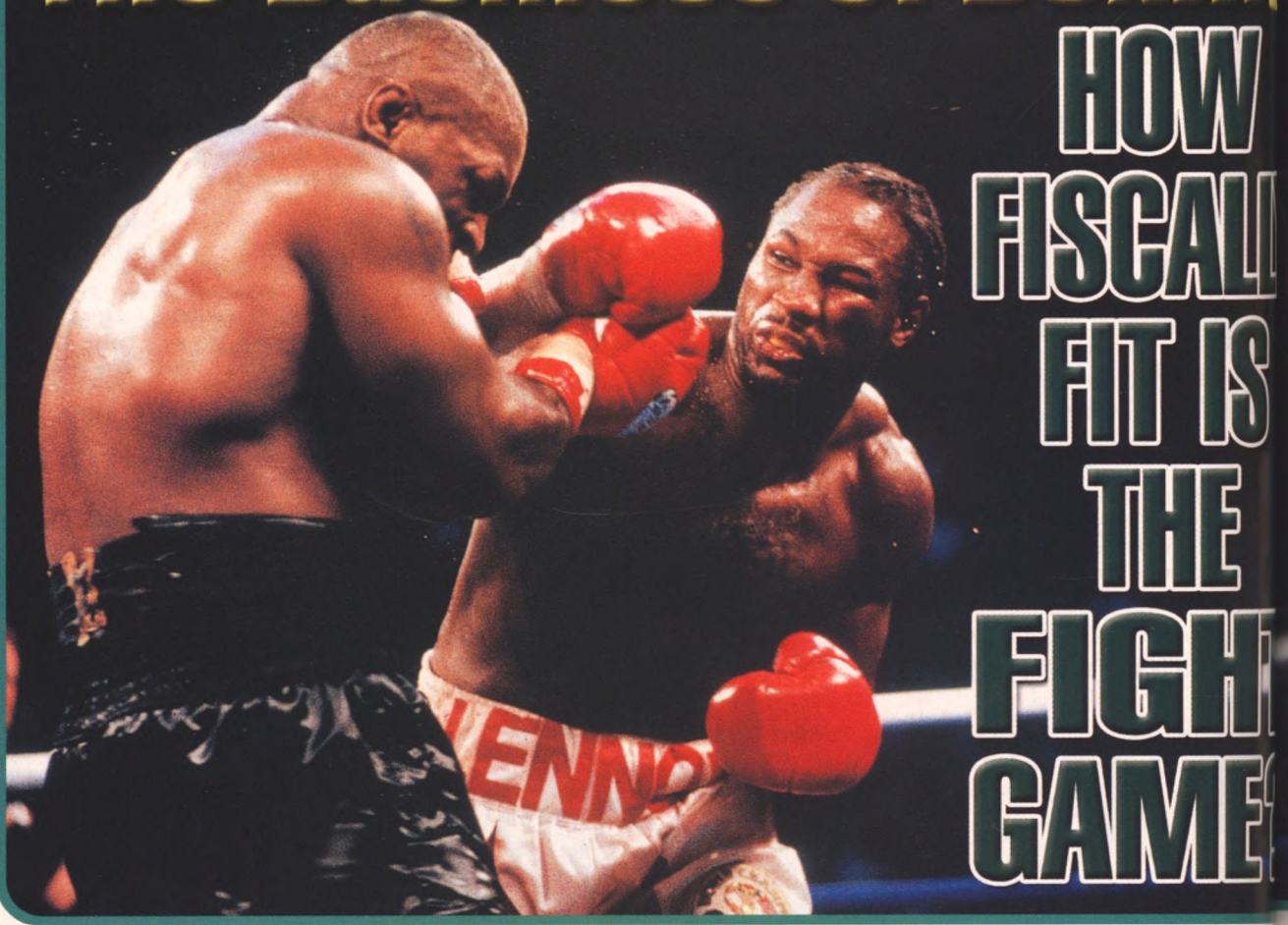


HOW FISCALL FIT IS THE FIGH GAME

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

By William Dettloff

You remember. If you've been at this for a while you remember how it was when things were better. You remember fights on free television almost every weekend, sometimes in prime time. You remember when there was one champion per weight class. You remember staying up late to catch fight results on the news, even fights that weren't especially important. You remember reading the fight writers every day in the newspaper, and you remember when big fights started getting ink a full week before. You remember going to work or school or the barbershop or the bar down the street and always finding guys to talk fights with. And they knew what they were talking about. You remember when the fight business mattered to the rest of the world as much as it did to you.

You remember how it was then. The mainstream sports media covered boxing like it did any other major sport. The talking heads who yammered on about baseball or football didn't snigger when someone brought up this or that fight. Boxing was relevant. People didn't look at you oddly when you said you were a fight fan, and you didn't feel the need to defend it all the time. They didn't confuse it with professional wrestling. Maybe your mom thought it was too violent and someone you knew thought it should be abolished to keep guys from getting killed in the ring, but they recognized its place in the world and in culture. It was as important as any other major sport.

It's been a long time. But there is evidence that the fight game is making a comeback. Consider: Last June, Lennox Lewis and Mike Tyson met in the highest grossing prize fight in history. Yes, it was Tyson, and so we should have expec big numbers because people still are fa nated with him, for reasons that have l to do with the sport. But Tyson against anyone wouldn't have done record-bre ing numbers. It was Tyson against the heavyweight in the world, and so it important—and, ultimately, lack enough in controversy at the end so everyone watched and enjoyed Tyson ing his beating and, for a few days, tal about the fight. Was it like old times? course it wasn't. But for those few day least, it was close.

It was only three months later Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Var got together and reportedly gave Mandalay Bay its most profitable week in the casino's history. By the time it over, the fight did 900,000 pay-per-v buys, second only to De La Hoya-Fe Trinidad for a non-heavyweight fight.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pay-per-view expectations were far exceeded by the two biggest fights of 2002, Lennox Lewis' flogging of Mike Tyson in June (left) and Oscar De La Hoya's spectacular win over Fernando Vargas in September (above). But does the overwhelming success of these two promotions necessarily mean the boxing business as a whole is on the rise?

live crowd of 11,425—a sellout—paid $8.8-million, the seventh highest live take in Nevada's history. The pay-per-view revenue was nearly $46-million. Between HBO's pay-per-view arm, the suits at Mandalay Bay, and the local commission, nobody could stop gushing. The newspapers covered it. So did a lot of the news stations. Southern California damn near came to a halt. It was a good, good time to be a boxing fan, and for a while it felt like 1977.

You want more? Micky Ward and Arturo Gatti, a pair of iron-willed brawlers who by this time are almost clubfighters, earned million-dollar paydays when reaction was so great to their first match that they cashed in with a sequel—which, by the way, reportedly was halfway to sold out within a week of the tickets going on sale. Now, we know no fight in Atlantic City is going to sell out in 11 minutes, unless maybe Bruce Springsteen is making his pro debut on the undercard, but for a non-title fight on the boardwalk in November to move half its load in a week says good things about the health of this business.

Doesn't it? Aren't things good, too, if you can't channel surf for more than eight seconds before you run into a fight card? Between the fights on ESPN2, Telefutura, Telemundo, HBO, Showtime, FOX SportsNet, ESPN Classic, and who knows what else anymore, you can see more televised beatings on almost any given day than you would if you were watching a *Cops* marathon.

And that's only in the United States. In much of the world, boxing looks as healthy as it's ever been. In Great Britain, junior welterweight left hooker Ricky Hatton draws 17,000 fans to watch him beat up guys who will never get within driving distance of the top 10. In Canada, Eric Lucas—yes, that Eric Lucas—brings in more than 13,000 against Omar Sheika. And Sven Ottke and Dariusz Michalczewski, who have zero appeal in the United States, routinely draw such huge crowds in Europe that they feel perfectly confident never having to bring their acts across the Atlantic. Why should they? Why would they?

There is every reason to believe that the fight game is enjoying a bit of a renaissance right now. Isn't there?

"In my life as a boxing fan, the business has never been this weak overall," said boxing adviser and former HBO executive Lou DiBella. "Things are not great right now. There is not an American heavyweight champion, and the one we do have—Lennox Lewis—doesn't captivate the world, even though he's very good. There are very few big draws. There's Oscar De La Hoya at the top and then Mike Tyson because of his celebrity, and that's it."

That's not good news. It's also hard to argue with. The cliché is that as the heavyweight division goes, so goes boxing, and for all of the grudging respect Lewis had earned in the last year or two, he does little to incite the passions of the casual sports fan. Hell, even most hardcore fans could take him or leave him. He's just not an exciting guy. The numbers he and Tyson did were Tyson's numbers. Everyone knows that. You can argue that there's something wrong with us that we can't fully appreciate a heavyweight of his talent and temperament, but the bottom line is we don't. Maybe it's not his fault. Maybe it's ours. Either way, it's the way it is, and it's not good business for the game.

If you want proof of DiBella's claim, consider that seven of the 10 richest fights in Nevada history involved either Tyson or De La Hoya; at the top is Lewis-Evander Holyfield II—clearly an aberration spurred by the controversy of the first match—

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Micky Ward and Arturo Gatti have reason to be happy, as they've helped each other earn a cool million for their November rematch. When a non-title fight can draw fan interest and cash flow like this, it says great things about boxing's potential to be huge again.

number nine is Lewis-Hasim Rahman II, and 10 is Trinidad-Vargas. Every fight in between involved De La Hoya or Tyson. How can the sport flourish if it has just two stars, one of whom is barely a top-10 contender anymore?

Every sport needs stars to bring in the crowds. Baseball needed Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa and Ken Griffey Jr. and Barry Bonds. When the NBA was on the verge of collapse, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird and Michael Jordan pulled it back. The stars today keep it going. Who would know or care about the NBA if Jordan was the only player anyone knew? It would barely register. Now consider how many people today would tell you Mike Tyson was the heavyweight champion if you stopped them on the street and asked them.

Clearly, the fight game needs more crossover stars, but good luck finding any. Roy Jones, arguably the best fighter in the world and one of the most talented in decades, remains a mystery to the mainstream, despite his rap records and Nike endorsement contract. Floyd Mayweather seemingly had all the necessary ingredients—an occasionally charming personality, a bright smile, loads of skill—but he feuded with his father and with HBO and with Bob Arum and now has an arrest record involving domestic violence.

Shane Mosley, touted by many as potentially the second coming of Ray Leonard, dropped two duds to the skilled but bland Vernon Forrest, but even befo then drew some of the lowest ratings HBO fight ever scored. Think about Who else is there? Paul Spadafora? Dav Tua? Jameel McCline? Bernard Hopkin Kostya Tszyu? Forget it. The lack crossover stars affects the sport in ever way.

"Business is not good," said Bobb Goodman, matchmaker at Don Kin Productions. "There are very few telev sion dates. And there are no real sta around to draw the fans in. The gam needs a star."

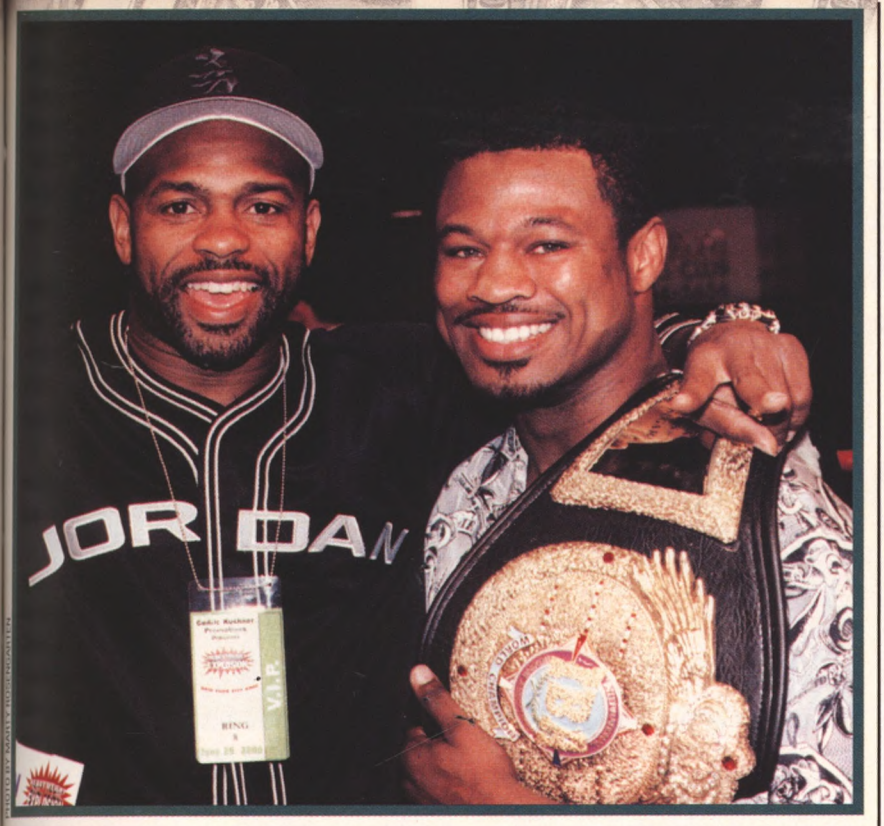
Very few television dates? How ca that be when every time we turn aroun there's a fight on television?

"There are TV dates out there, but the [the TV executives] are pretty selective to who gets them," Goodman explained. "They're using dates with specific promo ers and fighters who they've worked wi before. If guys are willing to work with their rules, they can get them. A small pr moter who is happy to break even on show can do it, but a bigger promoter can give everything away."

Goodman and DiBella both say th ESPN and FOX SportsNet, channe whose budgets limit them primarily to t game's second- and third-tier fighters, pa less for a show now than they did a year two ago, a sure sign that times are n good.

"If you're trying to develop young ta

There's no better argument in favor of the health of boxing abroad than Ricky Hatton, who dra thousands upon thousands of fans in England even to fight nobodies like Mikhail Krivolapov (picture



Despite what his shirt says, Roy Jones is no Jordan, and Sugar Shane Mosley is no Sugar Ray. Jones and Mosley both failed to reach their potential to become mainstream superstars, leaving Tyson and De La Hoya as the only current crossover stars in the sport.

ent, you can't do it on ESPN," said DiBella. An inability to create new stars results in a suffering business all the way around. "The business is not in an upswing. There are three or four companies right now, major players, who are in real financial trouble. If you listen to the sports radio call-in shows, you'll see that the day or two before or after a big fight there will be some calls, but the other 355 days of the year, no one calls about boxing. And it's significant that when a boxing writer leaves a major newspaper now, he is never replaced by a full-time fight writer. The general public perceives the sport as corrupt and, to be honest, based on past history of the last five or six years, you can't blame them for that."

It sounds bleak. Many in the industry are relying on the Hispanic fan base, the fastest-growing segment of the American population and a very strong boxing demographic, to keep the game alive. Top Rank President Bob Arum has stated several times in print that the Hispanic fight community is the future of the sport and as a result he has invested heavily in that market, most obviously with his Telefutura series, which consistently gets good ratings. Goodman agrees with the strategy.

"The Hispanic market is the fastest-growing segment of the business. Hispanic fight fans are ardent and they really know boxing," Goodman said. He adds, though, "We need fighters like Julio Cesar Chavez and Roberto Duran, who transcended their nationalities."

According to DiBella, that's the key.

"If you're thinking boxing is going to survive on the Latin market alone, that's not going to happen. The Hispanic market watches the World Cup in droves, but it doesn't make soccer a big sport in America. We need to create new English-speaking fans, and anyone who doesn't agree with that is being very short-sighted."

Even those who don't share the gloomy views held by DiBella and Goodman agree that the sport needs stars in addition to those generated in the Latin market.

"Boxing has always been a cyclical sport in America," said Nevada Athletic Commission Executive Director Marc Ratner. "First it was Irish-American fighters, then an upsurge of Jewish fighters, then African-American, and now it's Hispanic fighters. What we don't have is

(Continued on page 38)

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ANYBODY HERE SEEN TUNNEY?

Jack Cavanaugh, who covers sports for The New York Times, is writing a book about former heavyweight champion Gene Tunney for Random House, one of the world's most prestigious publishing houses. The book, tentatively entitled "GENE TUNNEY: The Life and Times of Boxing's Brainest Champion," will focus heavily on Tunney's two victorious fights with Jack Dempsey, including the famous "Long Count" bout in Chicago. Cavanaugh, who interviewed Tunney before he died in 1978, is looking for people who knew Tunney and/or saw him fight, particularly his epic bouts with Dempsey in 1926 and 1927.

Cavanaugh is also looking for pictures and other memorabilia relating to Tunney, including fighters he fought against, such as Harry Greb, the great former middleweight champion and the only fighter to beat Tunney (Tunney subsequently beat Greb four straight times).

Anyone who knew Tunney or who has any materials – photos, memorabilia, etc. – involving one of boxing's most intelligent and well-read, but underrated and unpopular, heavyweight champions, please contact Jack Cavanaugh at 203 834-2794 or by email at jcavan3673@aol.com or by writing to him at 23 Kent Hills Lane, Wilton, CT 06897.

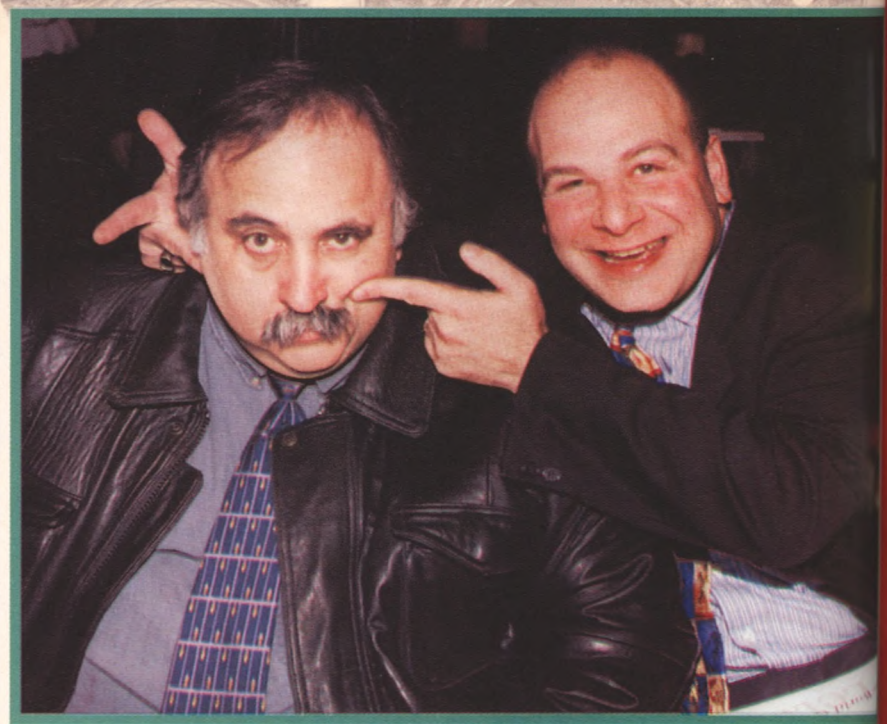
Boxing Business

(Continued from page 37)

an America's fighter. Joe Louis was an America's fighter. Rocky Marciano was, too, and later in his career, so was Muhammad Ali. And after him Sugar Ray Leonard.

"We don't have passion about the fighters here like they did in Mexico when Julio Cesar Chavez fought and the whole country stopped. Hispanic fans are passionate about the sport. In Brazil, Acelino Freitas carries the entire country on his shoulders. In America, there are so many sports for good athletes to choose from, and boxing is the hardest sport there is. So a lot of very good athletes go into football or basketball or baseball."

Even with that, Ratner sees the fight game enduring, even flourishing under the right circumstance. "I'm bullish on boxing. People tell me all the time that boxing is dying, that it's becoming a niche sport. But there are more fights televised on cable TV than ever, and there are more fight venues now than there have been in years. This year we will have 60 cards in Nevada. Boxing plays a major part in the economy here. I believe that the fan base is growing even though the demographics are older than the advertisers would want *[Perhaps not; see 'Ringside,' Page 6—ed]*. But if we could get a bi-weekly series on a major network, I believe the numbers would improve."



According to Lou DiBella, making boxing promoters smile is not an easy thing to do these days. DiBella claims there are three or four major players in "real financial trouble" right now; is veteran promoter Cedric Kushner (pictured with DiBella) one of them?

Two decades ago, Ray Leonard and Roberto Duran provided boxing with an African-American superstar and a Hispanic fighter whose fan base stretched beyond just his countrymen. Does either exist today?

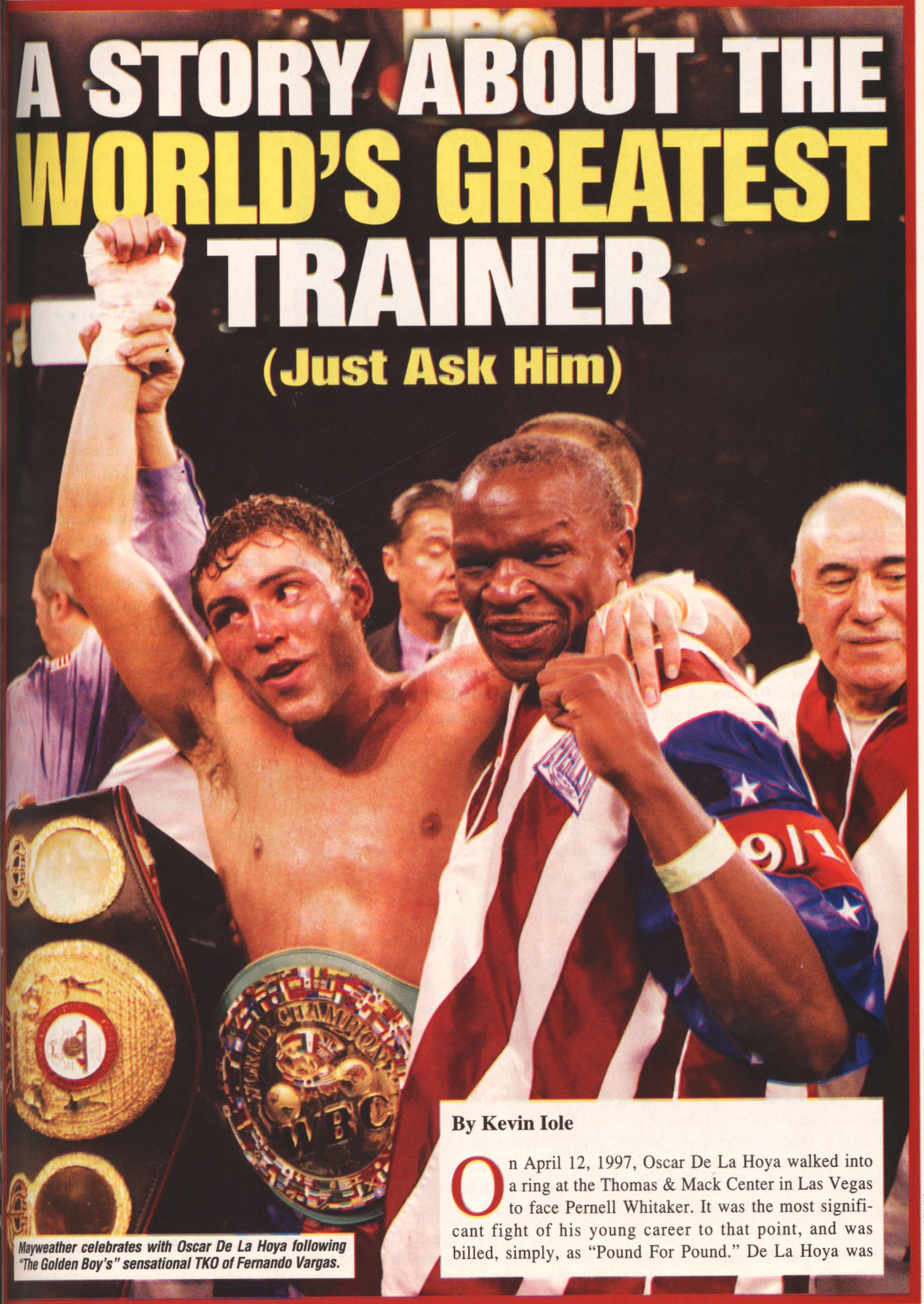
You can see it any way you wish. The business is full of pessimists, as it always has been. Clearly the game is not as it once was. But as Ratner points out, people have been predicting the fight game's demise for as long as there has been a fight game. Sooner or later, a star comes along and everyone forgets the bad times. In the 1960s, it was Muhammad Ali. A decade later it was Leonard. When he left, along came Tyson. It will happen again.

"All it takes is for one guy with crossover appeal to come along," said DiBella. "I think it will happen."

Until then, relax. Enjoy the fights. Enjoy the fighters. Enjoy the insanity. Enjoy what everyone else is missing. And remember why you started watching in the first place.

A STORY ABOUT THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRAINER

(Just Ask Him)

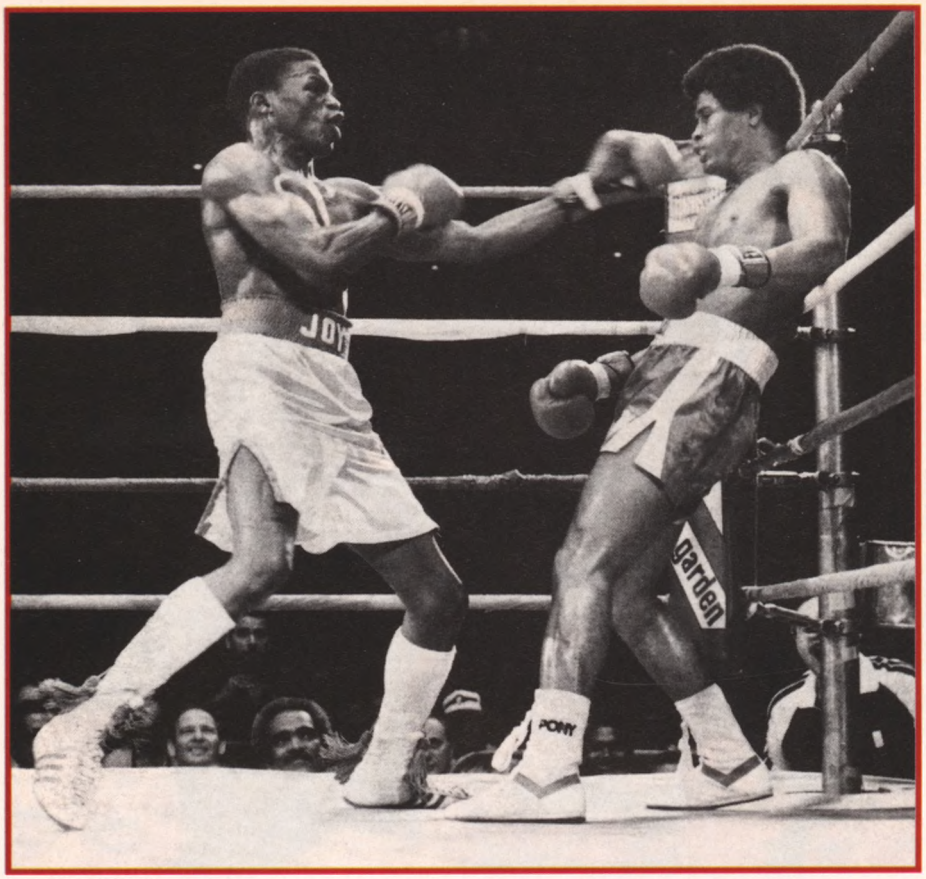


Mayweather celebrates with Oscar De La Hoya following "The Golden Boy's" sensational TKO of Fernando Vargas.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

By Kevin Iole

On April 12, 1997, Oscar De La Hoya walked into a ring at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas to face Pernell Whitaker. It was the most significant fight of his young career to that point, and was billed, simply, as "Pound For Pound." De La Hoya was



The elder Mayweather, pictured en route to an eighth-round kayo of Jose Baret in 1983, was a fringe contender during his ring career, but feels he didn't make the most of his abilities.

already rich and famous, but a win over Whitaker would lift De La Hoya to stratospheric heights in terms of fame, money, and celebrity.

In that same arena, Floyd Mayweather Sr. tried to figure out where his life was headed. He had gotten out of a federal prison only 11 days earlier, after serving 3½ years on drug possession and distribution charges. He didn't face a bright future. He was all but broke, a convicted felon with no job, no money, and little hope. What he did have, though, was faith in himself.

And so, the rich superstar boxer and the penniless paroled felon weren't thinking about each other that night, as De La Hoya won a highly controversial decision. At least not consciously. But De La Hoya said he had been thinking of someone like Mayweather for years.

"I knew I needed someone to put me over the top, to teach me those last few things, to refine what I had," De La Hoya said. "I didn't know who that person would turn out to be, but I knew I needed someone who could do those things for me."

And Mayweather knew he needed someone like De La Hoya, though the prospect of landing that someone 11 days out of a federal prison was remote at best. Mayweather was concentrating at that time on the career of his son, Floyd Jr., as he had from the day on February 24, 1977, when Floyd Joy Sinclair was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The baby was born to Mayweather's girlfriend, Deborah Sinclair, and his mother gave him her name. But to Mayweather, there was no doubt that son would be like Daddy. Mayweather was a marginal welterweight, who lost once to Ray Leonard and twice to Marlon Starling. When his career ended, he felt he hadn't gotten all he could out of his ability. He was going to make sure his oldest child did.

"I picked him up and told him, 'You're going to be a boxer and your daddy's going to make you the champ of the world,'" recalled Mayweather. "It's his daddy who's made him what he is today."

The baby eventually took his fathe name and became one of today's pr mier fighters, fulfilling his fathe prophecy by winning the WBC sup featherweight title and the world lig weight championship.

As remarkable as the son's achiev ments have been, in many ways th pale in comparison to what the fath has accomplished. Just 5½ years aft walking out of prison, Mayweather S became the talk of the boxing world. devised the plan that would lead to D La Hoya stopping arch-rival Fernan Vargas in the 11th round in their bat for THE RING's 154-pound champ onship.

But before De La Hoya settled m ters in the ring, Mayweather Sr. things rolling outside of it. He talk And talked and talked and talked. A boasted and bragged and taunted a chided. But most of all, Mayweath made himself one of boxing's hot co modities.

Only days after De La Hoya's victo over Vargas, Mayweather agreed to tr Panchito Bojado, the highly regard prospect whose lax approach to his wo led to a stunning loss. And Mayweath isn't about to take his foot off the acc erator. Now that he's hot, he wants take advantage. He's stoking the fires

Mayweather first made a name for himself training son, "Pretty Boy Floyd." But the two had a falling out, a the younger Mayweather is now trained by his uncl Roger Mayweather, a two-division former titleholder.

The Mayweather method: De La Hoya demonstrates one of the new defensive techniques that Mayweather has taught him during their brief time together. The junior middleweight champion says that Mayweather is by far the best trainer he's ever had—but it should be noted De La Hoya has said that of most of his past trainers also.

what appears to be a one-way feud with Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward.

A few weeks before De La Hoya and Vargas fought on September 14 at Mandalay Bay, a reporter called Steward for analysis of the fight. Steward said he figured De La Hoya would win, but warned De La Hoya not to take Vargas lightly. Then, almost in an aside, Steward said he was shocked to hear Mayweather's boastful pre-fight comments.

"I'm surprised that Mayweather is talking the way he is," Steward said. "Oscar was a superstar long before he even knew who Mayweather was. Mayweather just loves to talk. That's how he has always been. And he truly believes that. But it doesn't mean everything he says is the gospel truth."

Mayweather didn't waste any time. When he read Steward's comments to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on the Internet while training De La Hoya in Big Bear City, California, he picked up the phone and called the reporter who had written the story. He had De La Hoya in tow.

Mayweather loudly and angrily derided Steward and said De La Hoya himself would talk about how little he learned from Steward, who has been regarded not only as one of the best trainers of his generation, but also as one of the best of all-time.

"The only thing I learned from Emanuel Steward is how to shoot a jump shot," De La Hoya said, chuckling, after taking the phone from Mayweather.

De La Hoya then mounted an affirmative defense of Mayweather. Steward trained him for two fights, wins over David Kamau and Hector Camacho, but De La Hoya said that working with Mayweather was like opening the keys to the vault of boxing knowledge.

"I'm working hard in the gym, and Mayweather is teaching me so much about the sport of boxing," De La Hoya said. "He's by far, *by far*, the best trainer I have had. I mean no disrespect to anybody, but I've worked with Mayweather every day now and I'm learning and growing so much as a fighter.

"I've worked with Emanuel Steward; I worked with The Professor [Jesus Rivero] in Mexico. I worked with everyone, basically, and no one has done as good a job training me and teaching me as Mayweather."

Two days before De La Hoya was to fight Vargas, Mayweather went off on Steward again. He chided a reporter who mentioned Steward and said Steward

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Another thing Mayweather stressed in training camp was that De La Hoya had to use his right hand more. As is clearly illustrated by this photograph, Oscar learned his lesson well. Vargas was subjected to a right-handed pounding before De La Hoya finished him off with a left hook.

Prior to the De La Hoya-Vargas fight, Mayweather bad-mouthed Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward (pictured with De La Hoya and Lennox Le back in 1997), who graciously shrugged off the verbal insults Floyd Sr. hurled his way.

wasn't worthy of being in the Hall of Fame.

"Emanuel Steward shouldn't be in the Hall of Fame, he should be in the Hall of Shame," Mayweather said. "It's a joke for someone to say he's a trainer. He can't train. Emanuel Steward can't teach a cat to piss."

Mystified by Mayweather's comments, Steward shrugged his shoulders and said, "That's Floyd."

And so it is. Mayweather has learned that being outrageous can pay in boxing, particularly if you have the goods to back it up. Mayweather appears to have the goods. But he doesn't have as long a resume as, say, Steward has, with only his son and De La Hoya as examples of his work.

"Pretty Boy" had an angry split with his father in the spring of 2000, but he was 18-0 (13) with Floyd Sr. in his corner and looked to be at his best. Even when his uncle, Roger Mayweather, took over as his trainer after "Little Floyd" fired his father, there were calls for him to bring back his old man. Before he fought Diego Corrales in January 2001, in what was his biggest fight at the time, he spoke on the phone with his father—who claims he gave his son the plan that he used to chop down Corrales and stop him in the 10th.

"Without his daddy talking to him, he would have gotten hurt," said Mayweather. "My brother [Roger] can't train. He's a pad man. That's all. Without me, you look at Little Floyd and watch how much he's getting hit. He never got hit like that when he was with his father."

The elder Mayweather has never been shy with his opinions, but he took it to a new level during the promotion of the De La Hoya-Vargas fight. He stole a page from the dominant fighter of his generation, Muhammad Ali, and began spouting poetry, bragging, and generally putting the spotlight firmly on himself.

He showed a knack for making news, and if there wasn't a reporter around, he would find one. Less than two hours before De La Hoya would fight Vargas, Mayweather was in the press room at the Mandalay Bay, glad-handing with well-wishers and eating at an ice cream bar. All the while, he was touting himself as the world's greatest trainer and predicting that De La Hoya would knock out Varg

"Floyd says some outlandish thing but he knows what he's doing," said pr moter Bob Arum. "He took the heat Oscar. This was a fight where there w a lot of emotions involved and a lot intensity. There could have been a lot bad words going back and forth, b Floyd made sure Oscar didn't have worry about that. Floyd allowed Oscar concentrate. He took some of the foc and the heat off Oscar and put it on hi self, and that allowed Oscar to do what had to do to get ready."

He got him ready using a style that rarely used in boxing today.

Mayweather advocates a defensi system of shoulder rolls and head mo ment. He's trying to teach De La Hoya throw his shoulder in front of his face a tuck his chin behind it in order to avo punches. He's also an advocate of a do ble jab, beginning to the body and com up to the head.

"That's your offensive and defensi bread and butter," Mayweather said.

In the Vargas fight, De La Ho became a two-fisted fighter for the fi

time anyone could remember. De La Hoya is left-hand dominant, and had begun to rely almost exclusively on his left hand. Mayweather, though, knew that a fighter couldn't excel at the top level fighting that way. And as good as De La Hoya is, Mayweather felt he needed a right hand to be able to beat fighters like Felix Trinidad, Shane Mosley, and Vargas.

After stopping Vargas—hurting him with a left at the end of the 10th and then knocking him down with another left early in the 11th—De La Hoya said a lot of the credit had to go to his right hand.

"It was like adding another weapon," De La Hoya said. "The first time I met Mayweather, he started telling us about his philosophy of boxing, and he said that no fighter he trained would be one-handed. He told me from the start that he would teach me to throw a right and to make me want to throw it.

"He's crazy, sometimes, and he just keeps all of us loose, but think about this: Every single thing he said he would do, he has done. As far as I'm concerned, he's the best trainer in the world. I've been through a lot of them and now I've found what I've been looking for. I can't imagine being anywhere else."

Mayweather, on the other hand, can. He's now at the top, but he's been at the bottom. He was shot in the leg by his son's mother's boyfriend while he cradled his infant son. He was told he would never walk again, but he came back to fight Leonard. He sunk to the depths of selling drugs, moving from marijuana to cocaine because, as he says candidly, "there's more money" in cocaine.

He knows what it's like to be at the bottom and he likes where he is a lot better now.

"I knew I had a lot to give to boxing," Mayweather said. "When I got out, I just had to believe. I made a big mistake, and I was determined that my life was going to be different when I got out. Boxing was the thing that would do it for me. I have all this knowledge, so it would be a shame just to waste it and keep it up here *[tapping his forehead]*. I had to share this gift, and that's what I've done." ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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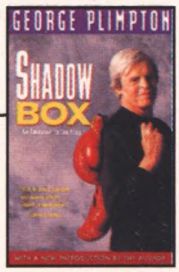

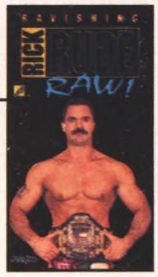

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Junior Lightweight NATE CAMPBELL

Don't Bet Against A Fighter Who Will Bite Off A Cat's Tail

By Johnnie Whitehead

Anger doesn't win fights, and it doesn't make you a winner in life either. It may give you fuel to carry on when you're getting beat. It may intimidate the easily intimidated. All things being equal, however, the cooler head wins out more often than not. In the ring, Nate Campbell knows that. Outside the ring, that concept isn't quite as easy to grasp. But at least he's aware that his anger management skills are akin to those of Eminem and is trying to do something about it.

"It's hard for me to not stomp a mud hole in somebody this day," said

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAIN EVENTS

Campbell, who burst into the junior lightweight title picture with a crushing third-round knockout of Daniel Alicea on the September Oscar De La Hoya-Fernando Vargas undercard. "I'm a nice guy, but just don't push me. I have a temper. A cat scratched me when I was young, and I bit its tail off. That's no lie. You do something to me, and I do it to you twice as bad."

Hey, maybe Alicea got off easy. The Puerto Rican veteran is not championship caliber, but he's only been dominated by the absolute best, and even had Naseem Hamed on the deck before being stopped in 1996. These days, Alicea, 27-5-2 (20), is a gatekeeper whom 126- and 130-pound prospects must conquer to be taken seriously as contenders.

"I knew I could get him early if he stood in front of me," said Campbell, 22-0 (20). "I'm a great puncher, especially to the body. Alicea likes to come forward. I wouldn't let him. Any man who stands in front of me and I hit him, will go."

"I don't think there's a 130-pounder that can beat him," said trainer Buddy McGirt, who worked with Campbell for just the second time in the Alicea bout. "He has that dogged determination. He's something that division's been lacking. He's not the flashiest guy in the world, but he gets the job done. He's going to do whatever it takes to win."

And whatever it takes to survive.

Growing up in the LaVilla section of Jacksonville, Florida, wasn't a walk in a park. In fact, if you tried walking there, you'd probably get mugged.

"I'm from a bad neighborhood," said Campbell. "My family was the worst of the bunch. Having the last name Campbell where I come from was a death sentence."

Campbell's mother had him at age 16 ("She was a hustler"), but his father, who had a failing kidney and liver because of a drinking problem, raised and provided him with the little he had. It wasn't much, but it meant the world to Campbell.

"He taught me to be a man. My dad is father of the millennium," said Campbell of the man who died on his 10th birthday. "I don't care what problems he had, nobody's father was better than mine."

Throughout his turbulent childhood, Campbell lived in rickety wooden houses, a staple of the old South, much like the grits, gumbo, black church bombings, and lynchings. He stayed with relatives, cramped with as many as 25 children in a single home, because his aunt and grandmother would look after other people's kids, too. Sometimes, the only light Campbell would see came from the Florida sunrise, or at the end of the tunnel that he envisioned inside his mind. An occasional trickle from the faucet was the closest thing to running water. Until he went to school, his only brush with air conditioning came from the breeze of cars passing, which felt much like a wave of hot air from an open oven door.

PHOTO BY JED JACONSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

The hard-hitting Campbell ran his record to 22-0 (20) when he blasted out Daniel Alicea on the De La Hoya-Vargas undercard in Las Vegas. The impressive outing has raised Campbell's marquee value.

It was social Darwinism. There was no timeout, no grounding, no go-to-your-room-and-think-about-what-you've-done punishment. If the children had a problem with each other, they had to squash it or squash each other.

"They let us fight until we got tired," Campbell said of the elders' unconventional method of dispute resolution. "I've got a cousin who my record against is 0-88-1."

As well as getting bounced repeatedly by his cousin, Campbell found himself bouncing between foster homes, where the going was every bit as rough. The abuse

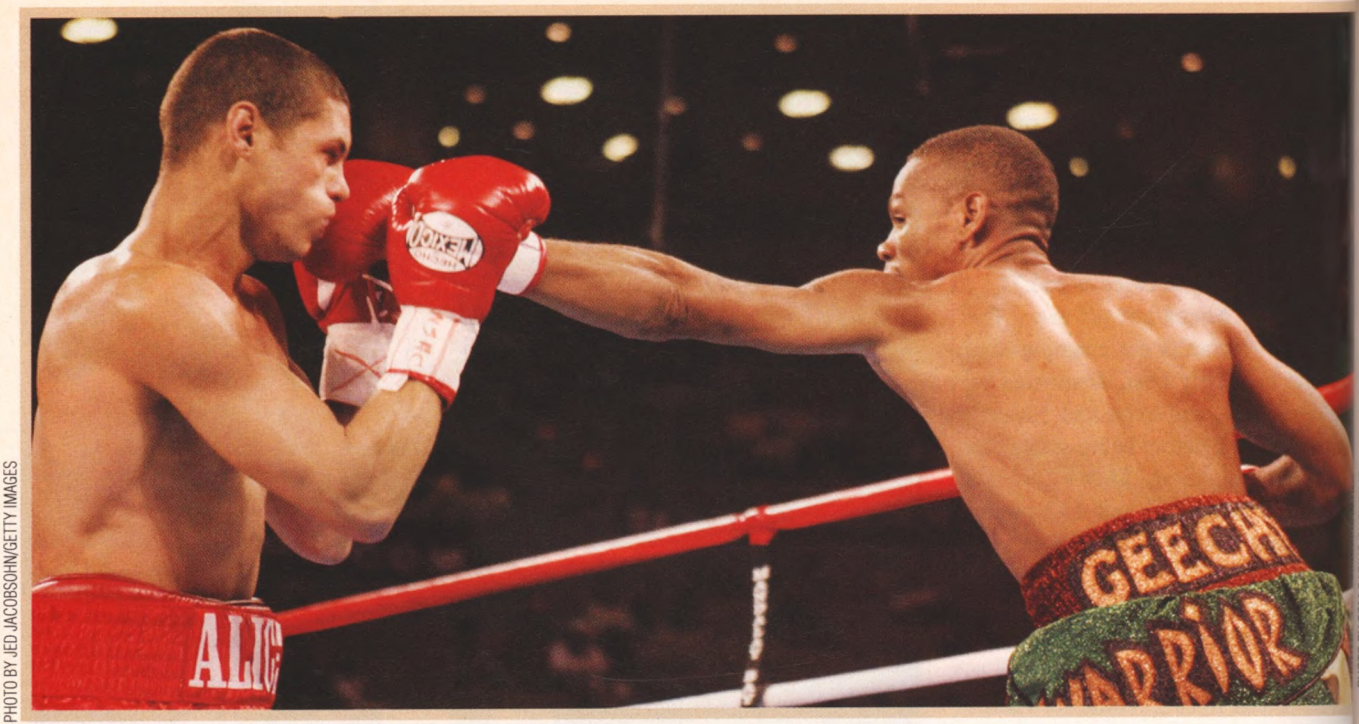


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

While basically a banger, Campbell is refining his game and using his jab more under new trainer Buddy McGirt. For most of his pro career, Campbell has trained himself, but feels he's finally found the right man in McGirt.

was more mental than physical. Instead of being encouraged to be all you can be, he was told to aim low and settle for whatever scraps life had to offer. It's one of the few topics that makes the colorful, high-strung Campbell, who normally speaks with the joy of a child on Christmas, change his inflection. It evokes emotion that leads him to more reflection.

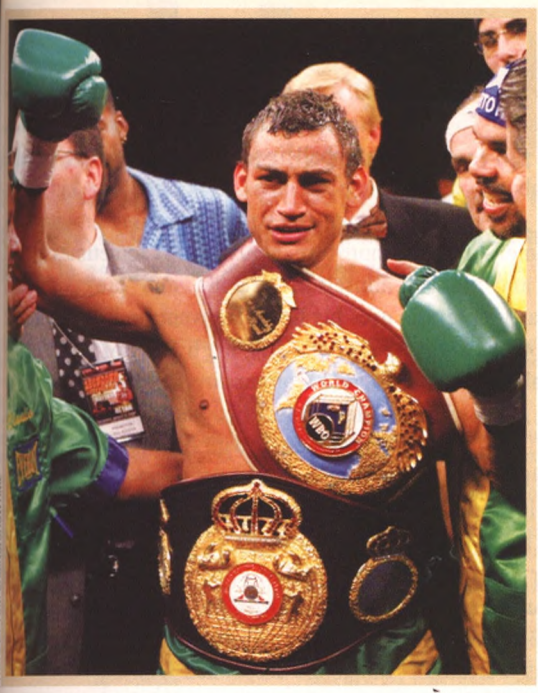
"It's never like being at home," said the 30-year-old Campbell, who was separated from his two sisters, Samone and Beverly Jones, by the state and hasn't seen them since he was seven. "Some people have ways of raising kids that's a little bit more radical or abusive. It made me mentally tough. Taught me how to harness my anger and my fear. You learn to never accept no as a final answer.

"I ran away a few times. They'd always bring me back, but it wouldn't make it any better. It drives me to do my best at everything. You learn as a foster child that nothing is yours forever."

Campbell's pro boxing career didn't start until 2000, when he scored five knockouts, and he posted 11 victories the following year. He was just a blip on the radar when he scored a ninth-round knockout of James Baker in February '02. He followed that up with a crowd-pleasing, fifth-round stoppage of Carlos Navarro, who was 23-2-1 (18) coming in, in June on Showtime. In that one, Campbell had to fight through a few cuts, but he dropped Navarro three times in the second round before the opposing corner halted the slaughter three rounds later.

With his recent demolition of Alicea, which came via a wicked right hand that turned the Puerto Rican's lights out befo his body crashed to the canvas, boxing power brokers have taken notice—should every fighter lingering around th featherweight and junior lightweight clas es. And not only does Campbell hav punching power, he has attitude as well.

***It's all over 43 seconds into the third round as referee Robert Byrd counts out Alicea. While beat Alicea isn't the biggest deal in the world, the exciting manner in which "The Galaxxy Warrior" d the job put him in line for a possible spot on HBO's* Boxing After Dark.**



Campbell would like nothing better than a match with WBA super featherweight titleholder Acelino Freitas (pictured). He'd also gladly fight for the vacant IBF belt, and at age 30 he needs to make his move in the near future.

"You got to want this thing. I don't care how many days you spend in the gym, either you're a fighter or you're not," said Campbell, who signed with Main Events in April. "I see fighters trying to punk their opponent by slapping him, like Barrera did Erik Morales. I would whip his ass. I would've strangled him. If Prince Hamed talks trash to me, I'd throw pigs' feet at him."

Though he came up with the likes of 2000 Olympians Jeff Lacy, Ricardo Williams, Rocky Juarez, Michael Bennett, and Jose Navarro, Campbell didn't have a stellar amateur career. He went 30-6, but didn't collect any national or world titles. Plus, he was considered old, and nobody wanted to take a risk on him.

Campbell has always been a do-it-yourselfer. Originally, he had a trainer, but from his fifth through 10th fights, he trained himself. He latched on with someone else for three fights after that, but he went back to training himself up to his 20th fight. He'd go anywhere he could to get work, driving to Jerrells Gym in Savannah, Georgia, to spar with the likes of Ebo Elder and David Santos.

He left behind a job at a grocery store, and a side job selling and installing car stereos. He occasionally slept in his '98 Chevy Capris when he was on the road.

"I ate sardines, potted meat—that was like canned steak to me—and crackers," Campbell said. "I've taken baths in some of the finest and worst convenience store bathrooms in northwest Florida. But I never called anyone asking for money. I never had anybody give me anything."

Despite Campbell's approach, Main Events wouldn't let him continue working on his own, so the promotional company hooked him up with McGirt. Their union truly was a blessing.

"I was fed up with trainers," said Campbell, who now works out of the House of Champions in Vero Beach, Florida. "When Buddy's name was mentioned, something felt good about it. I remember him when I was a kid. Whatever he tells you, you can take it as gospel. It is the truth. He is like Paul of the Apostles as far as boxing is concerned. His mind is a boxing mind.

"Buddy is so cool. He's so calm about everything. Buddy is like my older brother giving me some directions. He was the man in the game. He's got the blueprint. All I got to do is follow my big brother."

Now that Floyd Mayweather has moved up five pounds and become lightweight champion, Acelino Freitas is top dog in the junior lightweight division, thanks to his defeat of Joel Casamayor earlier this year. The Brazilian's hold, though, could be a tenuous one. Neither he nor Casamayor looked terribly impressive, and Campbell is aching for a shot to make his case. Even if it's a shot at the recently vacated IBF belt.

"Do you really want to see a 150-pound Stevie Forbes and David Santos fight again?" asked Campbell rhetorically, knowing full well that he's much more exciting to watch than either of them. "I live like a monk when it comes to my body. I don't drink, don't smoke."

Still, Campbell, who calls himself "The Galaxxy Warrior" (yes, that's the way he spells it) is looking far beyond alphabet titles for recognition. He's looking in the

(Continued on page 48)

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Nate Campbell

(Continued from page 47)

far-off places he used to dream about when he was a foster child.

"My goal is the Hall of Fame. Along the way I hope to get a title and make some money," he said. "Great fighters make the Hall of Fame. Why not aim high if you're going to aim? I think about it every time I fight. What must I do, who must I beat?"

According to Carl Moretti, Main Events' vice president of boxing operations, Campbell will fight one more time this year, possibly in November in an off-TV fight on the Micky Ward-Arturo Gatti undercard, or on an ESPN2 show in December. In addition, HBO has indicated it's interested in booking Campbell for a *Boxing After Dark* telecast in early-2003.

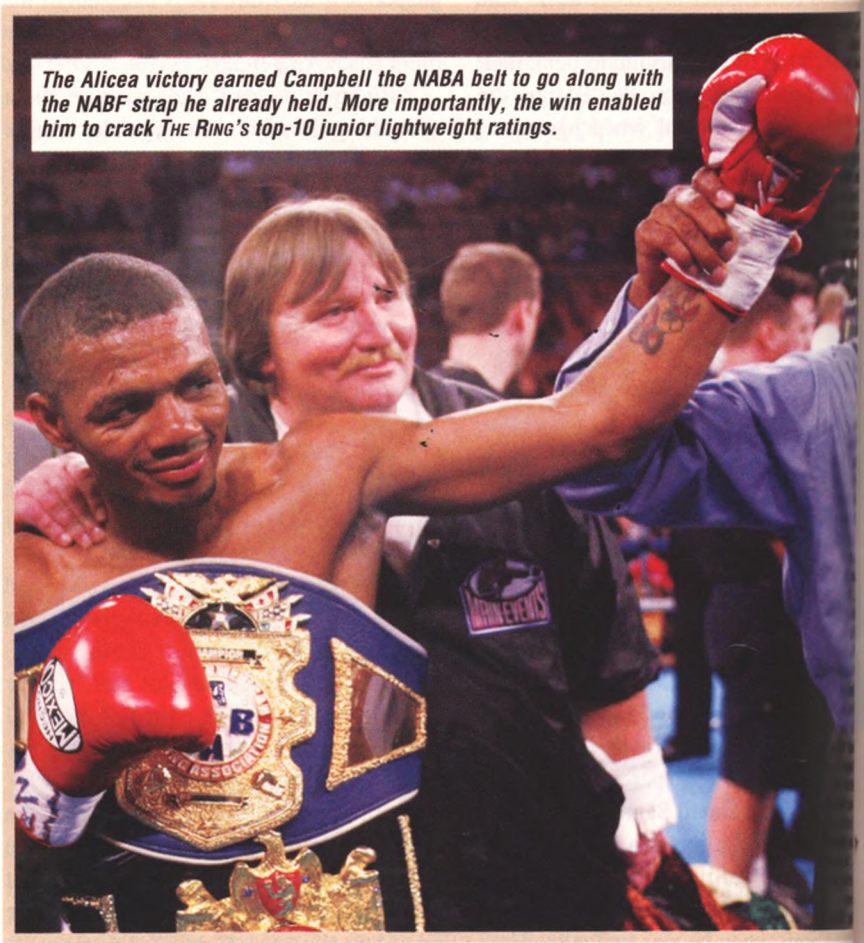
"Because of his ability, he would fight anybody from 126 to 130," said Moretti. "I thought he would knock Alicea out, but I didn't think it would come so early. I didn't think he would do it as clean Nate is at a different level now."

Like a fighter who can fight inside a outside, who can brawl as well as bo Campbell is learning to be more versati when it comes to his life. The kid who known for being impulsive and having short fuse, a guy who'll sometimes refer himself as "geechie" and "projectish," al uses his head. He went back to school a received his high school diploma f Florida Community College. He has com pleted almost two years of college. He h even reunited with his mother, with who he lives most of the time, and is a father three children himself. He still wants t find his lost sisters.

"I refused to be pigeonholed into a ba place," said Campbell, who wants t change his family's image so that positi things are associated with the name. "Th is not who we are, and I don't want peop to know my family as being bad."

Except in the ring, of course.

Johnnie Whitehead is an editor f USA Today and a regular contributor this magazine.



The Alicea victory earned Campbell the NABA belt to go along with the NABF strap he already held. More importantly, the win enabled him to crack THE RING's top-10 junior lightweight ratings.

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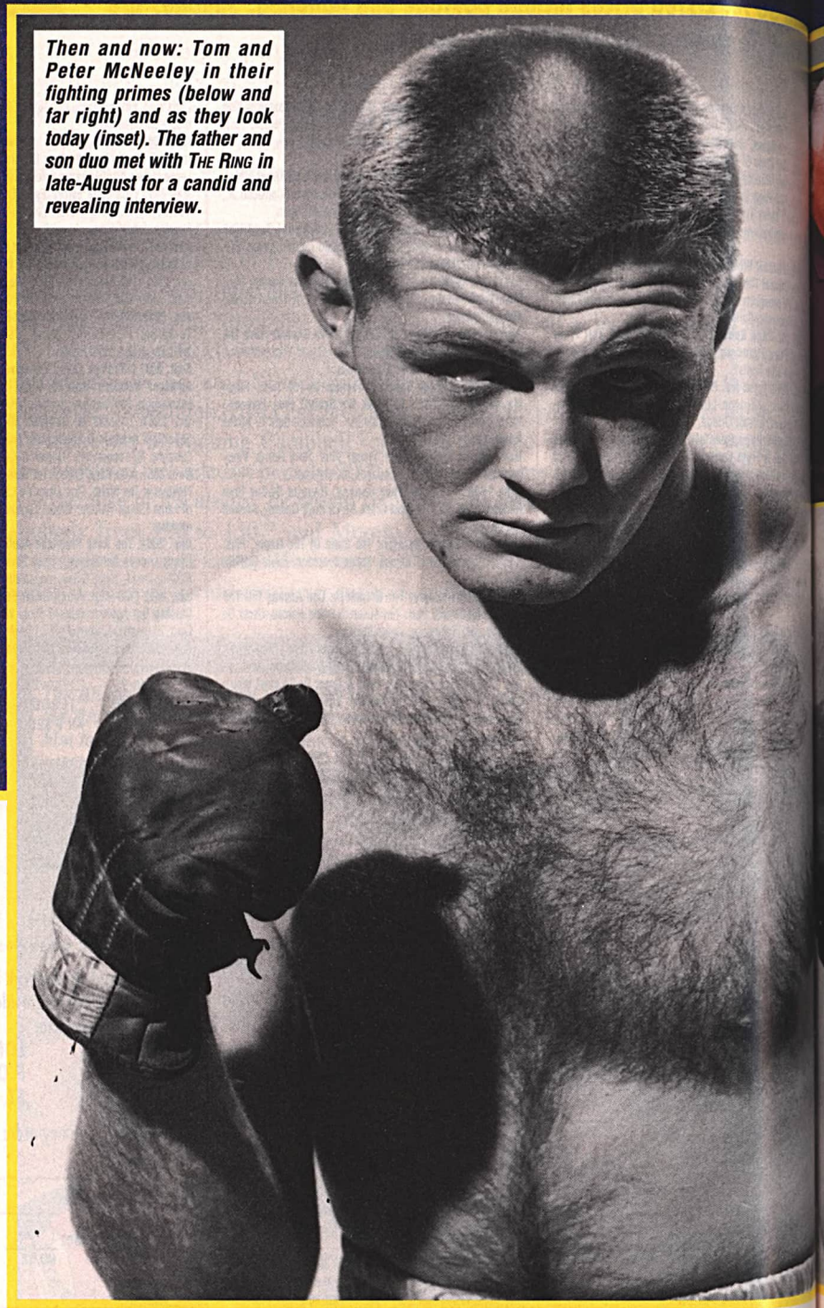
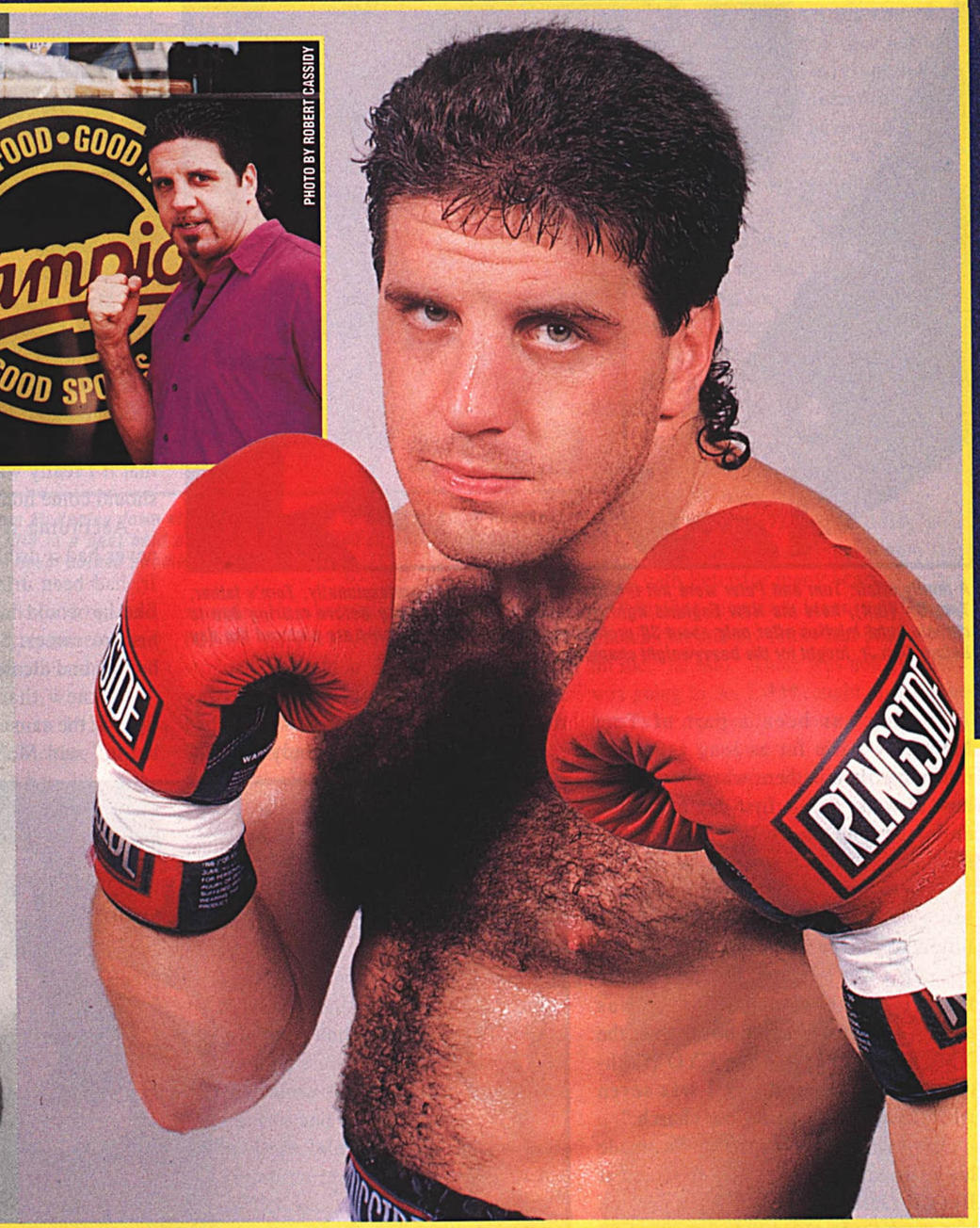
TOM & PETER McNEELEY

Drugs & Alcohol Were Tougher Than Patterson & Tyson



Then and now: Tom and Peter McNeeley in their fighting primes (below and far right) and as they look today (inset). The father and son duo met with THE RING in late-August for a candid and revealing interview.

PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY



By Robert Cassidy

"The toughest fight I ever had was against John Barleycorn." Those words come from Tom McNeeley, who traded punches with three future Hall of Famers over the course of his eight-year career as a heavyweight contender.

Just how powerful was this John Barleycorn?

"He kept knocking me down over and over again," said McNeeley.

The opponent he speaks of won't be found in any volumes of *The Ring Record Book And Encyclopedia*. It is McNeeley's euphemism for alcohol, a drug that nearly destroyed his life.

In his prime, McNeeley was a man's man, a tough Boston Irishman who trained hard, fought hard, and drank hard. The best and worst of Tom McNeeley was genetically passed along to his son Peter, who also boxed as a heavyweight and partied like a champion.

"I inherited the family disease," said Peter. "But Dad also bestowed the gift of recovery on me."

In August, the McNeeleys sat down with THE RING at a trendy Boston eatery to discuss the dominant themes they share—boxing and addiction. When alcoholics are in sobriety, as the McNeeleys are, they are told to live their lives one day at a time. Fighting temptation is part of the daily struggle. On this day, the waiter arrived and innocently asked if he could bring a round of drinks to the table. "Beer? A nice bottle of wine? Or how about a martini?"

Tom McNeeley looked up from the menu as if he were staring down an opponent at the center of the ring. He's been sober for more than 16 years and the thought of alcohol flowing over his lips repulses him. Peter grinned at his dad. "I'll have a coke," he said.

Tom, who is 65 years old, ordered an iced tea.

"One drink was too many and 50 weren't enough," Tom said of his drinking days. "Drinking was the worst thing that ever happened to me."

A family affair: Tom and Peter were not the first McNeeleys to box professionally. Tom's father, Tom Sr. (left), held the New England light heavyweight championship before retiring due to chronic hand injuries after only about 30 professional fights. The two Toms are pictured the day before Tom Jr. fought for the heavyweight championship.

***

Boxing has been a part of Tom McNeeley's life for as long as he can remember. It was there when he learned how to walk, on his first day of school, and when he made his Holy Communion.

"I was born into boxing," he said. "I had gloves on my hands since I was a little kid. Maybe two or three years old. My father was a fighter, my uncles were fighters. In those days, boxing was everywhere. It was at the boys' club, the YMCA, churches had the CYO [Catholic Youth Organization]. I was seven when I started boxing for our church."

His father, Tom McNeeley Sr., made his boxing debut on the very first card at Boston Garden in 1928. As a pro, he was the New England light heavyweight champion, but retired after about 30 pro fights because of constant hand problems. He may have quit the ring, but not the sport. McNeeley Sr. taught boxing at the Cambridge YMCA, and his sons were among his pupils. Three fought as amateurs and two as pros. Tom Jr. was the best of the brood.

But boxing was not his only passion. McNeeley excelled at football and was a high school all-American, receiving 8 scholarship offers. He chose to atten Michigan State (with his brother Brian because it also offered intercollegiat boxing.

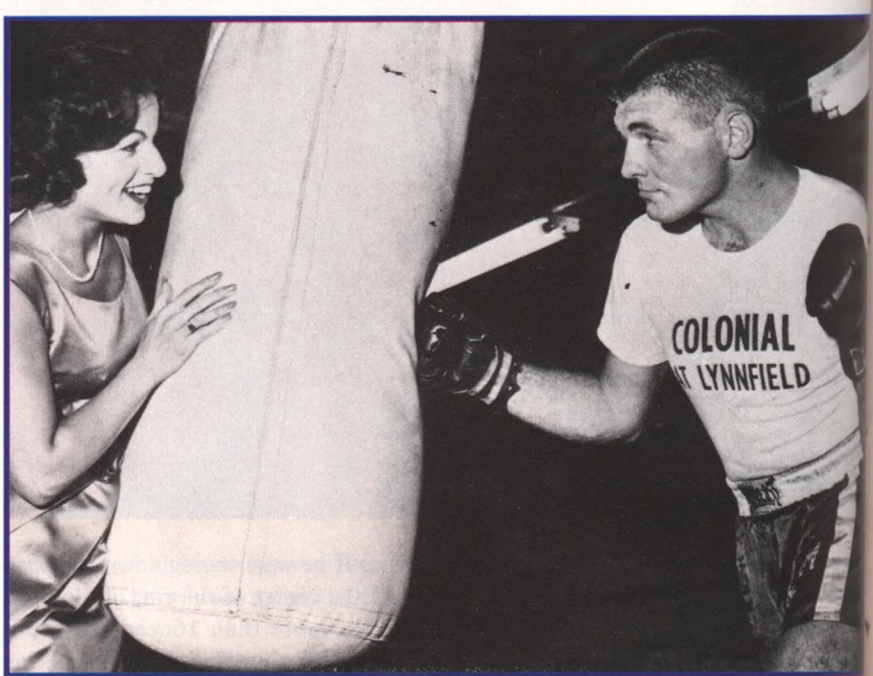
"The football team was ranked num ber one in the country for a few week during my sophomore year, but Illinoi knocked us off," said McNeeley. "W finished the season 9-1. I played tackle People ask me, offensive or defensive We played both ways then. None of thi offensive and defensive stuff."

After his sophomore year, Michiga State dropped its boxing program, and McNeeley dropped out of school.

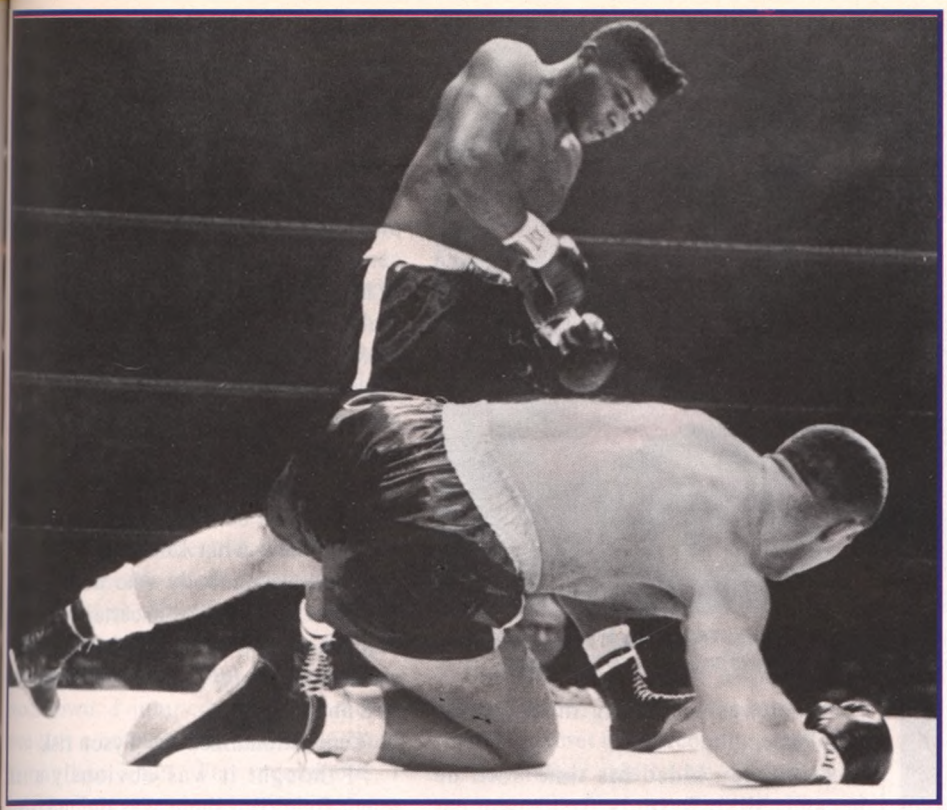
"My father didn't want to see me qui school," he said. "He told me, 'If you quit school to turn pro, don't ever com home.' I took him seriously, so I went t Chicago and started training there. The he found out where I was and explained that if I really wanted to box that badly should come home."

According to McNeeley, his father never had a drinking problem. But Tom Jr. had been drinking socially—nothing like he would later—when he launched his pro career. Still, he understood that boxing and alcohol didn't mix.

"I knew that I couldn't drink and fight at the same time, so I white-knuckled it," said McNeeley. "I just stopped



Peter's mother, Nancy, holds the heavybag for then-husband Tom in this 1961 publicity shot. The marriage broke up when Tom's addiction to alcohol got out of hand.



Floyd Patterson knocked Tom McNeeley down eight times en route to a fourth-round knockout victory to retain the heavyweight title in a bout held at Maple Leaf Garden in Toronto in December 1961. Tom fought on until '68, but never earned another crack at the title.

For four years I didn't take a drop, and that was the most productive time of my life. I was in the best possible shape of my life."

McNeeley turned pro in 1958. He was 23-0 with wins over George Logan and Willi Besmanoff when he challenged Floyd Patterson for the heavyweight title three years later. The bout was originally supposed to take place in Fenway Park in August, then Boston Garden in September, but for one reason or another, Cus D'Amato, Patterson's manager, forced the bout to be postponed. It finally ended up at Maple Leaf Garden in Toronto on December 4, 1961.

"I went into that fight so confident that I started to feel bad for Patterson," said McNeeley. "He was such a nice guy, so humble, I started to feel bad because I was going to take away his title. If anything, I overtrained for that fight. All through the postponements, I kept training. I had nothing for the fight."

McNeeley knocked Patterson down in the first round, but was subsequently dropped eight times over the next three rounds. He showed tremendous valor before referee Jersey Joe Walcott stopped the fight at 2:51 of the fourth.

"I knew going into the fight that he had very fast hands," said McNeeley. "I was sparring with middleweights to prepare myself for his speed. When the fight finally happened, I never imagined someone could throw punches with such speed. Especially a heavyweight. The punches were coming so fast I thought the referee was sneaking in some punches, too."

That was the high-water mark of McNeeley's career, although he continued fighting until 1968. He twice beat fellow contender Duke Sabedong and lost decisions to future Hall of Famers Jose Torres and Willie Pastrano.

In those later years, drinking was becoming more and more a part of his life, which was slowly crumbling.

"Drinking resulted in me losing a lot," he said, "including my marriage, my family, my money, jobs, businesses."

***

If Tom McNeeley was born into boxing, Peter snuck in the back door. As he was growing up, it was rarely a topic of conversation at home. Peter, named after fight manager Peter Fuller, was born after his father retired.

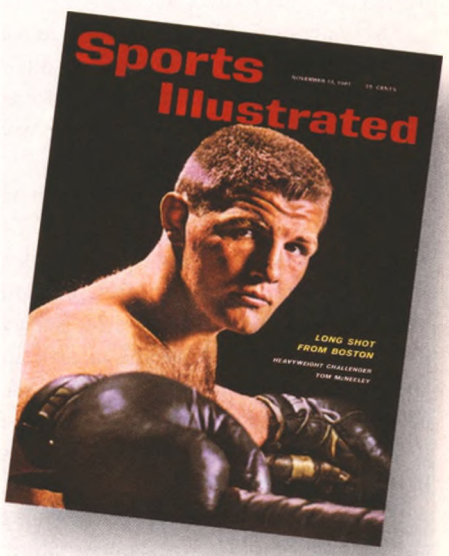
"The kids were too young," said Tom McNeeley. "We just didn't talk about it."

He taught his sons the rudiments of boxing in a very perfunctory manner. He equipped them with a means of defending themselves, but would have preferred if they stayed away from the game. For Peter, however, there was no escaping it.

"When I was seven years old, I knew that my dad boxed, but I was too young to understand to what extent," Peter said. "I climbed up to the attic because I wanted to find out more. I found my dad on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. That was one of the biggest thrills of my life. I'm still bragging about it."

The discovery in a dusty attic led to an obsession that would stay with Peter for many years.

"At that moment, learning that my grandfather and my father had boxed, it all hit me," he said. "There was nothing else I was going to do. I was caught up with the history of my family. I immersed myself in boxing. I became an addict. I was a wannabe. I became a fight historian."



Peter was inspired to become a fighter at age seven when he discovered an old copy of* Sports Illustrated *in the attic of the family home with his father's picture on the cover.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/SHOWTIME

Peter McNeeley attacks Danny Lee Wofford en route to a second-round TKO victory in 1995. At that point in his career, McNeeley had won 35 of 36 pro bouts and was closing in on a fight with Mike Tyson.

Peter knew his father was indifferent about his fighting, so he silently kept the fantasy alive while attempting to follow him in another sport. Peter suited up for football, playing offensive and defensive tackle, and started every game of his four-year high school career.

Peter attended nearby Bridgewater State College, and already began to show signs of a drinking problem. He failed out of school after one year and realized he needed the discipline of athletics to get him through college. He turned to boxing and returned to school, but admits he still partied.

"My father said, 'Pete, if you are gonna do this, do it right or don't do it at all,'" said Peter. "He was right, but I knew I was still going to mess around with my friends."

McNeeley's approach changed when he met trainer Vinnie Vecchione during his senior year of college. After Peter graduated with a degree in psychology, he and Vecchione began to bond, and McNeeley started getting results. While still an amateur, he beat Bobby Harris and James Johnson, both of whom were nationally ranked.

In 1991 he turned pro, and three years later he signed with promoter Don King. At the time there was talk of McNeeley challenging then-WBC titleholder Oliver McCall to open Boston's new Fleet Center. The WBC ruled that McNeeley could not meet McCall because he was rated 11 and not in the top 10.

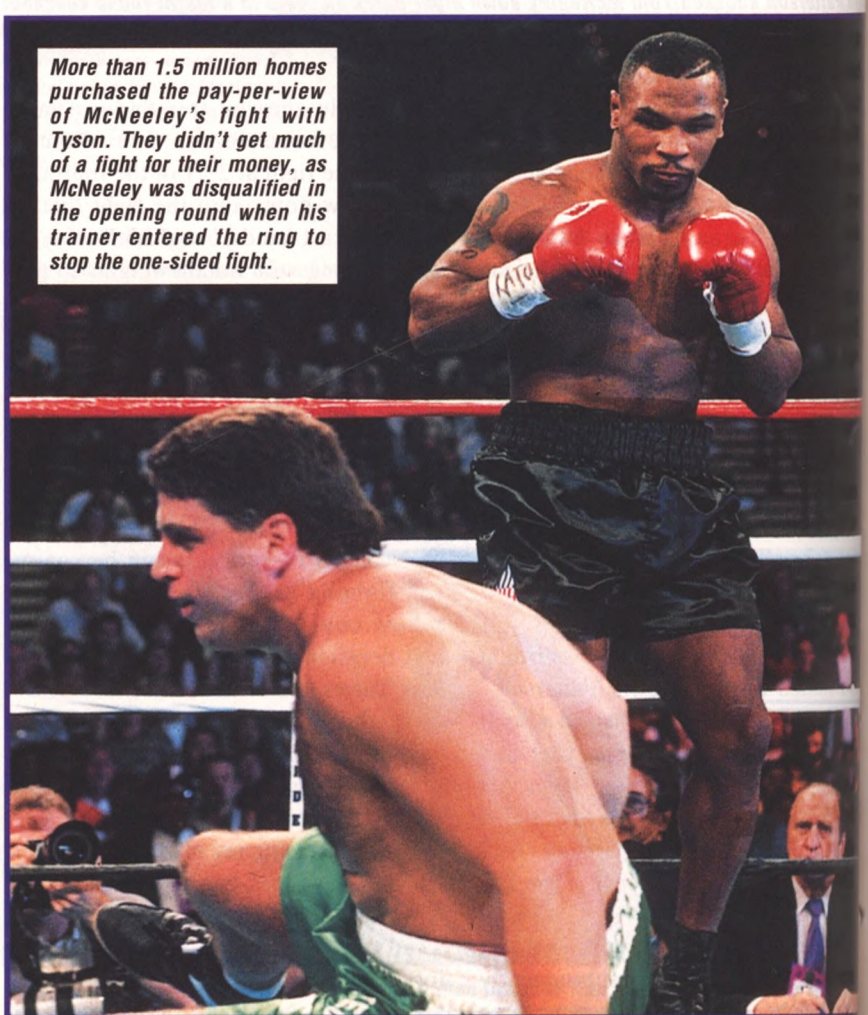
"That was a blessing in disguise," said Peter.

McNeeley bided his time until he became Mike Tyson's first opponent after the former champion was releas from prison in 1995. Tom was n enthused with the idea of his son fig ing arguably the most dangerous heav weight of the last quarter-centur Having personally endured the physic and emotional anguish of a boxi career, he never fully embraced the id of his son fighting for a living.

"It's hard watching your son fight he said. "When I was fighting, I was control. When he was fighting, I had control whatsoever. But I thought, we he's a big boy now; it's up to him. I do everything I can to be supportive a hope for the best. You see, my fathe always knew what kind of shape I w in. There was nobody who trained har er than I did. Unlike a certain someo that I know *[he glances at Peter, wh smiles sheepishly]*, who I always wo ried about."

Tom rationalized the Tyson risk.

"I thought it was obviously a re tough fight. But there was the unknow



More than 1.5 million homes purchased the pay-per-view of McNeeley's fight with Tyson. They didn't get much of a fight for their money, as McNeeley was disqualified in the opening round when his trainer entered the ring to stop the one-sided fight.

I didn't know how that stay in the can had affected Tyson. I thought if there was an opportunity for Peter to have a chance to beat Tyson, this would be it. He would have that puncher's chance. And I knew Peter wasn't afraid of him, like so many guys are when they fight Tyson."

The fight began with McNeeley rushing Tyson at the center of the ring and ended two knockdowns later when Vecchione threw in the towel. His father was right, Peter was not afraid of Tyson.

"I always knew that if you wanted to beat Mike Tyson, you had to back him up," Peter said. "So that's what I did. We did the best we could with what we had. I can say this in all honesty: It took a lot of guts on Vinnie's part to do that. He was setting himself up to be the bad guy while protecting me. After the first knockdown, I jumped up. They didn't even start a count. I was running around the ring like a nut. The second one, I took his best punch, a right uppercut point blank on the chin. I went down on my face. When a fighter can't get his hands up to stop himself from hitting his face on the mat, you know he's hurt. When I did get up, Mills Lane pushed us apart, and my legs were gone. If the ropes weren't there, I'd have gone down."

The instant fame and $600,000 purse simply accelerated Peter's addiction. Everyone in Boston wanted to buy Peter McNeeley a drink, and he had enough money in his pocket to buy them a round or two in return.

His evenings started with alcohol and ended with cocaine. The money he made to fight Tyson—more in one fight than his father made in his entire career—was going quickly. Fourteen months after the Tyson fight, Peter hit rock bottom near the same place his dreams started.

"I pitched a tent in a crack house in Brockton right around the corner from the gym I used to train in. I was there for six weeks. I went in a 225-pound, strong heavyweight and I came out a 195-pound crack bag."

***

Tom McNeeley's bottom was much more subtle. After alcohol destroyed his first marriage, to Peter's mom, Nancy, he realized that he couldn't afford losing a second marriage. He entered a 28-day rehabilitation and followed up by attending after-care programs.

"My wife, Gloria, she put up with me for a while," said McNeeley. "I knew it was destroying our relationship. I knew I had to do something. I found out there was a way to stop drinking, and it was through a 12-step program. My wife supported me. It wound up to be a great life."

When Tom thinks back about his drinking, he says his biggest regret is "the hurt I put on people" close to him, meaning his family and friends. Today, he works for the Massachusetts Department of Corrections, counseling correction officers who are battling addiction. He said the job is a daily reminder of just how potent John Barleycorn can be. If Tom had been reluctant to show Peter how to throw a jab, he was anxious to share his secret to overcoming alcohol.

"My father said to me, 'I think you are one of us, come with me,'" said Peter. "He took me to a 12-step program, and I went to meetings for the next few years. But the problem was, I was doing it for my dad or I was doing it for boxing. But I would still go out drinking and drugging. I wasn't doing it for me."

Peter began to take fights just for the money. In 1999 he was stopped by Brian Nielsen in Denmark and then by Butterbean. He won his only fight of 2000, but in '01, he was stopped by Henry Akinwande and then Mike Bernardo in Cape Town, South Africa.

In the recovery program, the first step is admitting to your higher power that you are powerless over your addiction. Tom came to terms with that 16½ years ago. When Peter was asked when he did, he said, "That's between me and my higher power. But now I go to two meetings a day. I'm doing this for me."

What he also wants to do is finish his career on his own terms. At the time of the interview in mid-September, he hadn't fought in 15 months. But as THE RING went to press, he was entertaining an offer to fight a young heavyweight prospect in Germany on five days notice.

"I'd prefer that he didn't fight anymore," said his father.

(Continued on page 56)

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Tom & Peter McNeeley

(Continued from page 55)

The damage from Peter's addiction combined with a prolonged accumulation of punches could jeopardize his health, if it hasn't already. Peter acknowledges that his mother and father both want him to retire. He understands the risks involved; he just wishes someone would understand him.

"I'm a third-generation fighter," he said. "It's in my blood. Obviously, the money is an incentive. But I love boxing. I just want to fight. I know I'm coming in as the opponent. But how many guys came up to Boston on short notice to be my opponent? That's part of the business. That's the cycle."

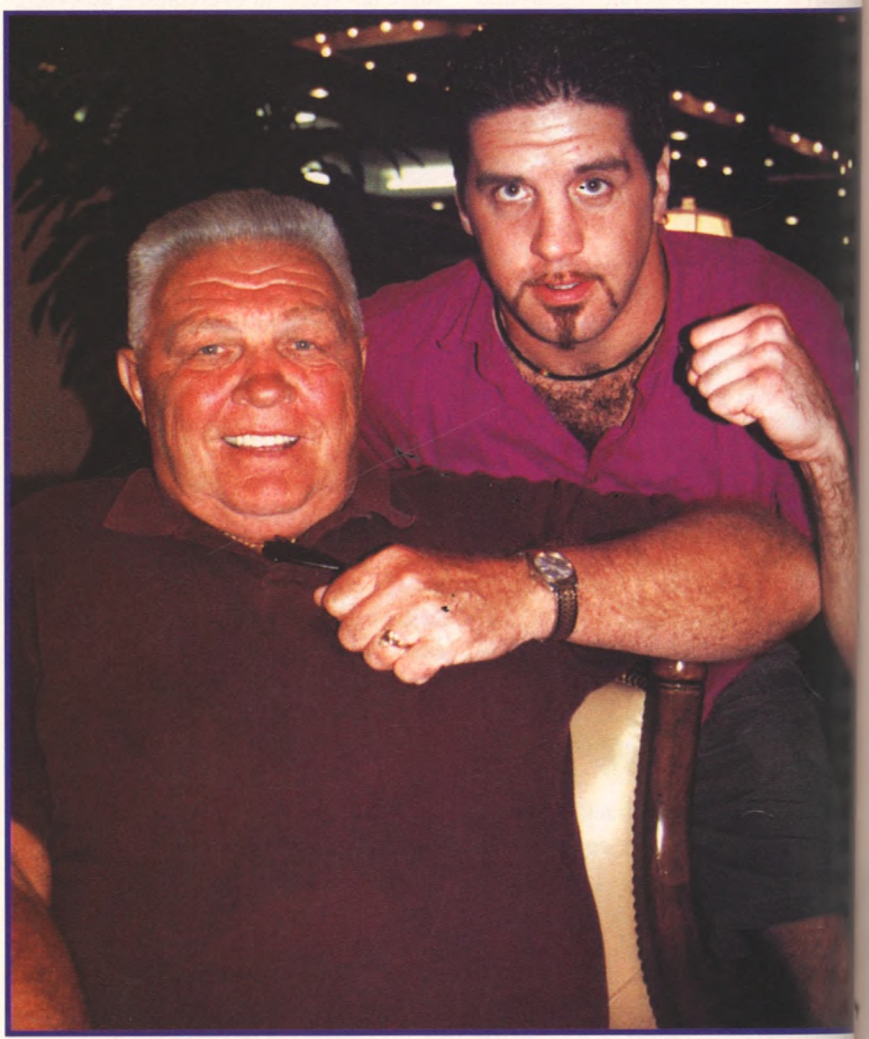
Peter, who turned 34 in October, sa he's promised his mother he'll quit the age of 35.

"If I die right now," he said, "I fe like I've done what I wanted to do. accomplished the goals in my life tha had since I was seven years old. I don have much longer to live out my dream This is what I love to do."

The enthusiasm in Peter's voice convincing, even if his logic is no Right now, boxing is Peter McNeeley drug of choice. His high is walking int the ring with the McNeeley nam stitched across the back of his robe. may not be the best choice, but it's be ter than taking on old John Barleycor again.

Even his father can understand that.

Robert Cassidy is a former associat editor of this magazine and a regula contributor.



Despite their many ups and downs, both in and out of the ring, Tom and Peter McNeeley ha a good relationship. Still, Tom would be happier if Peter gave up boxing, which he promis to do by the time he's 35 years old. Peter has been kayoed in four of his last six fights.

New Face

(Continued from page 20)

wanted to hang my head, and I had a good excuse to run away from everything," Thompson said. "I tried to take what happened to me and turn it into something positive. That's why I call myself 'The Messenger,' because I have a message for everyone: You can survive, you can overcome terrible things in your life. I have.

"I was never scared of anything growing up. Nothing. When you're so young, you don't really know what's going on in life, and raised the way I was raised, it helped me get through the hard times. I could cry and cry, fast and pray, and nothing was going to bring my babies back. You just have to deal with life and make the best out of it. My first child died in the arms of my wife. She just stopped breathing. My second child I picked up and there was blood coming from her mouth. I cried, but I couldn't let anyone see me cry. I had to be strong. I'd take long walks or go to the park and just cry. I was trying to handle the responsibility."

Thompson admits that wasn't always the case. When he was 15, his first daughter lived for six months, although she was always sick. She was frequently in the hospital, and Thompson was always getting calls to come and check on her progress. He didn't always respond.

"There was always some excuse I had to bring up," Thompson recalled. "I was young, running away from responsibility, and scared something was wrong with my child. I didn't want to face it. There are certain things you just can't prepare for. You let your emotions take over."

The bigger challenge came a few years later. He was recognized as one of the best amateur welterweights in the country in 2000, and he was looking to capture his third national amateur title at the United States championships in November '00, after winning the national Police Athletic League and national Golden Gloves tournaments.

But there were complications. Anthony and Tanisha were having problems with their second daughter, and the physical signs were jarringly similar to what the young couple underwent with their first child.

It was Thompson who discovered his three-month-old daughter's frail young body not breathing. He rushed his baby girl to the hospital, but he knew the truth. He knew she was gone, and when doctors came rushing to him, telling him his little girl had a chance, Thompson didn't want to hear it. He knew the reality of the situation.

Thompson also felt like saying "The hell with everything, including boxing." The strain of losing another daughter started to overwhelm him.

What buoyed Thompson were Tanisha, and his family—his mother Saresa, his father Kezz, and his older brother Tyonn.

"Whether Anthony won or lost, he always had us behind him," said Tyonn, 25, whom a young, skinny Anthony used to follow to the gym with a bag of chips in his hands. "I watched the kid cry right there, because he needed someone to lean on and talk to. We're a devotedly religious family, and I personally believe the reason why my niece was taken away was because Anthony had to stay grounded to be ready for success. God sent him a message through his two daughters, and God showed him the importance of life, and how short life can be."

But Thompson didn't give up. In fact, he went on to win his third national crown, and did it in such emphatic fashion that he was named "Outstanding Boxer" at the '00 U.S. championships. No one would have blamed Thompson for backing out in light of the grave personal setback. But Thompson learned something about himself in that tournament that he still carries with him today.

"I started losing a little motivation, and I understand where that came from," he said. "I carry a lot of inner strength and I'm starting to learn that whatever it is I want done, I have to do it. All I have to do is put my mind to it. I'm a go-getter. If I want something, I'm going to go get it."

Two years after losing to Jose Celaya at the '00 Olympic Trials, Thompson opted to turn pro. He felt he accomplished everything he needed to as an amateur except winning an Olympic gold, and he felt the politics involved in making the Olympic squad made the risk of waiting around until '04 too great.

"Anthony shows a lot of potential in a number of ways as a pro," said Eric Bottjer, Kushner's matchmaker. "Number one, he's very mature mentally, he's very focused on his boxing career, which is a problem more and more with athletes in this day and age. Number two, he has obvious physical talent. He hits hard, and his power is compounded by his speed. He knows where to hit you."

Bottjer pointed out that if Thompson decided to wait for the next Olympics, he would have been 23 by the time he turned pro. Thompson didn't want to be one of those boxers with 200 amateur fights, banking on the hope of making the Olympic team.

"This guy is right on schedule," Bottjer said. "I want him to fight a lot. I think it's good for these young guys to fight a lot. He's on a good pace, and with his experience as an amateur and skill level, by the end of 2004, he'll be competitive with anybody."

Ronald Jackson, Thompson's trainer, thinks the promising fighter is not half as good as he will be. There are still some kinks Thompson needs to work through, like sitting down more on his punches, using his jab more effectively, and fighting better inside.

"Anthony's still a young man, he's learning the ropes," Jackson said. "Some of his choices need a little work. They're not bad choices, they're young choices. His speed is good, but he thinks he's more of a powerpuncher than a boxer at this point, which gets him into more trouble than it should. He tends to get inside and stand straight up. The power will come and the speed will come, and he'll be more of a complete fighter."

In the meantime, Thompson is willing to be patient. He doesn't dwell on the past, though the pain of losing two children is something he may never get over.

"Anthony doesn't like to hold on to anything, but it's there, it's there," Tyonn said. "He holds on to what's happened. He may not want to admit it, but he holds on to it deep in his heart. Those situations could have taken his life away. I tell Anthony all of the time that he's won the fight of life. If no one ever mentioned it to Anthony, he would never bring it up. He's not fighting for a belt, he's fighting for the memory of his kids, wishing they were there watching him in the ring." ■

PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Lou Savarese KO 5 Tim Witherspoon
Danny Williams W 12 Keith Long
Jeremy Williams KO 9 Gilberto Martinez
Derrick Jefferson W 10 Sedreck Fields
Charles Shufford W 6 Marcellus Brown
Ray Austin KO 3 Francis Royal
Derek Bryant KO 7 Frankie Swindell
Robert Wiggins KO 1 Curtis Render
Duncan Dokiwari KO 2 Armando Rodriguez
Darroll Wilson KO 4 Bert Cooper
Saul Montana KO 3 China Smith
Imamu Mayfield W 6 Peter Okhello
Gerald Nobles KO 2 Dennis McKinney
Michael Sprott W 8 Derek McCaffrey
Timo Hoffman KO 7 Dickie Ryan
George Kandelaki KO 1 Eric French
Willi Fischer KO 3 Piotr Jurczyk
David Defiagbon W 6 Earl Hayes
Kali Meehan W 6 Shane Wijohn
Don Steele W 10 Giles Knox
Tye Fields KO 1 Marvin Hill
Cedric Boswell W 8 Melvin Foster
Ruslan Chagaev Tech. Draw 3 Rob Calloway
Audley Harrison KO 2 Wade Lewis

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Ernest Mateen W 12 Joey DeGrandis
Alain Simon W 8 Joe Siluvangi
Vincenzo Rossitto KO 6 Paolo Ferrara

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Paul Briggs KO 4 Glen Kelly
Zsolt Erdei KO 5 Jim Murray
Elvis Michailenko W 12 Alejandro Lakatus
Donny Lalonde W 8 Tony Menefee
Stipe Drews W 8 Faustino Gonzalez
Tim Shocks W 8 Louis Sargeant
Daniel Judah W 6 Juan Carlos Viloria

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Mads Larsen KO 3 Chris Walsh
David Starie KO 4 Ojay Abrahams
Danilo Haussler W 12 Juan Perez Nelongo
Mikkel Kessler KO 8 Gerard Zdziarski
Danny Green KO 2 Paul Tuilau
Enrique Ornelas KO 1 Anthony Bartinelli
Randy Griffin W 6 Ronald Boddie
Prince Badi Ajamu D 8 Anthony Bonsante
Librado Andrade KO 2 Shannon Miller
Jerson Ravelo W 8 George Walton

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Junior middleweight Leo Edwards flattens prospect Tom Wilt in the first round

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Bert Schenk KO 4 Slavomir Dendis
Derrell Coley KO 1 Tom Youman
Jerry Elliott KO 6 Sergei Marchuk
Anthony Farnell W 12 Ruben Groenewald
Satoru Suzuki KO 3 Bull Okabe
Dirk Dzemski W 12 John Tshabalala
Troy Rowland KO 5 Earl Jackson
David Lewter KO 2 Kenworth Minus

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Kassim Ouma KO 11 Darrell Woods
Jose Luis Cruz W 8 Oscar Delgado
Kuvanych Toygonbayev KO 2 Leon Pierson
Jose Celaya W 10 Darrell Sukerow
Alex Terra-Garcia KO 6 Vincent Harris
Peter Manfredo KO 7 Frankie Randall
Leo Edwards KO 1 Tom Wilt

WELTERWEIGHTS
Thomas Damgaard KO 3 Oscar Benavides
Ray Oliveira KO 9 Saul Duran
Sebastian Valdez W 12 Golden Johnson
Michele Orlando W 8 Sergej Starkov
James Hare KO 8 Farai Musiiwa
Mike Stewart W 10 Mike Davis
Philip Holiday KO 8 Ernie Artango
Lorenzo DiGiacomo KO 9
Gianluca Jommarini
Sven Paris W 6 Csaba Balatoni
Mohammad Abdullaev KO 1
Juan Antonio Lopez

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Oktay Urkal W 12 Gabriel Mapouka
Ricky Hatton W Disq. 2 Stephen Smith
Miguel Figueroa W 12 Rocky Martinez
Eamonn Magee KO 5 Alan Bosworth
Jorge Paez KO 8 Juan Macias
Masakazu Satake KO 12
Hiroyuki Sakamoto
Dennis Laurente KO 5 Andreas Seran
Dindo Castanares D 10 Daigoro Yamamoto
Fred Cadena KO 4 Norberto Frias
Rolando Reyes KO 1 Gustavo Tapia

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Juan Lazcano KO 6 David Armstrong
Colin Dunne W 12 Esteban Morales
Daniel Attah W 10 Tontcho Tontchev
Juan Golo-Gomez Trinidad KO 1
Isidro Tejedor
Yuri Romanov KO 10 Steve Murray
Ernesto Zepeda KO 2 Miguel Casillas
Antonio Ramirez KO 2 Jose Luis Baltazar
Alejandro Monzon W 12 Esham Pickering
Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12 Martin Jacobs

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Welters Mike Davis and Mike Stewart wage a bloody battle

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
Lamont Pearson W 10 Luis Lizarraga
Boris Sinitsin KO 2 Karoly Lakatos
Tiger Smalls KO 2 Roger Medal

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Israel Vazquez W 8 Justo Almazan
Jackson Asiku W 12 Serik Zahan
Eugenio Gomez KO 1 Robert Dalisay
Reymundo Beltran KO 2 Carlos Diaz
Steve Luevano KO 1 Ivan Alvarez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
Jose Rojas W 12 Genaro Garcia
Carlos Contreras W 10 Edel Ruiz
Jesus Perez W 8 Hugo Dianzo
Wethya Sakmuangklang W 6 Elwis Guamiki

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Cruz Carbajal KO 4 Danny Romero
Ratanachai Vorapin KO 3
Juventus Bongbom
Diego Morales KO 5 Cuauhtemoc Gomez
Johnny Armour W 12 Francis Ampofo
Ricardo Vargas W 12 Trinidad Mendoza
Steve Dotse KO 8 Oscar Martinez
Saohin Srithai Condo W 6 Elwis Guamiki
David Guerault W 8 Aneure Cuevas
Steve Molitor W 12 Nicky Booth
Vusi Malinga KO 1 Zolani Msolo
Jorge Gonzalez KO 3 Alex Becerra
Jose Navarro W 6 Jorge Lopez

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS
Dmitri Kirilov KO 3 Sergej Urshuyak
Daisuke Naito KO 7 Daochai Sor Sorgogym
Pramuansak Phosuwan W 12
Julio De La Basez

FLYWEIGHTS
Peter Culshaw W 8 Celso Danggud
Damaen Kelly W 8 Jovy Oracion
Wandee Chor Charoen KO 4
Vicente Adrales
Steffen Norskov KO 6 Domingo Guillen
Komrith Lukkeongmuekol KO 7 Jungoh Son
Dale Robinson W 8 Alain Bonnel

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS
Angky Angkota KO 7 Wendel Cajoles

STRAWWEIGHTS
Daniel Reyes KO 5 Farid Cassiani
Ernesto Rubillar W 12
Phlangchai Sor Vorapin
Pornsawan Porpramook KO 5 Fabio Marfa

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The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

Fifteen months is a long time in boxing. In 15 months, Lennox Lewis can go from heavyweig champ, to knockout victim, to heavyweight champ again, to making a $30-million purse. In 1 months, Felix Trinidad can go from undefeated, to once-defeated, to retired. In 15 months, Jam Toney can go from 195, to 226, to 190, and still find time between eating and dieting to play Joe Fraz in a movie.

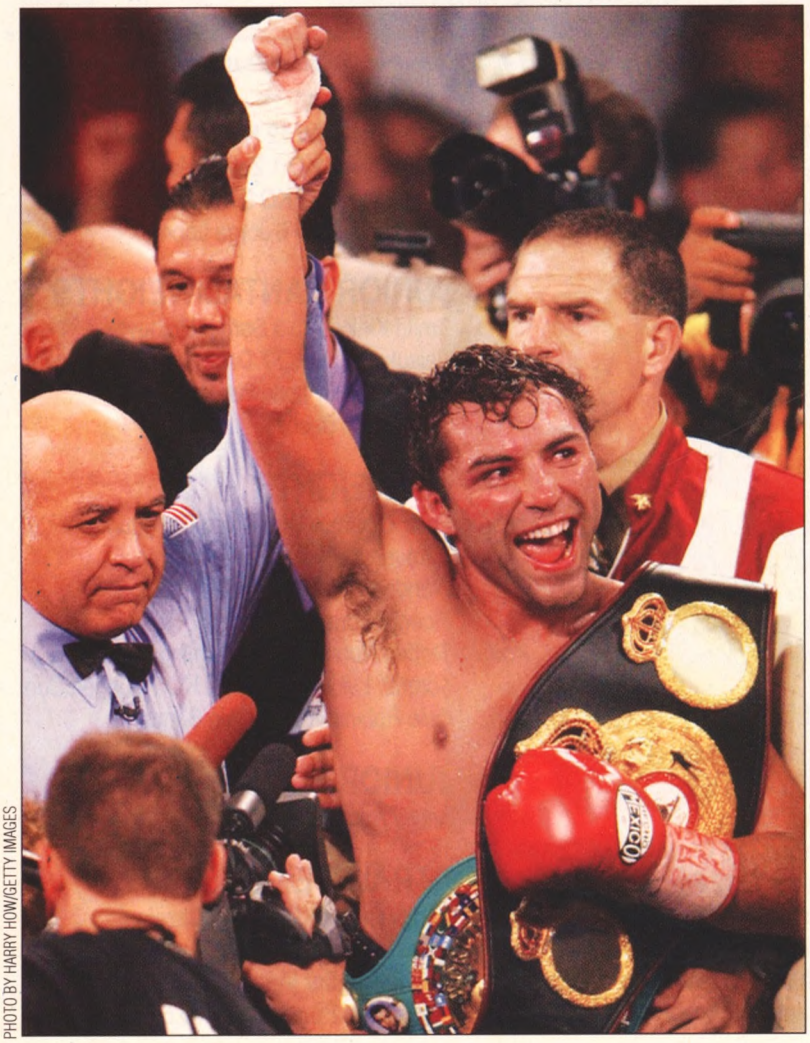


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

A lot can happen in 15 months. But for Oscar De L Hoya, from June '01 to September '02, not a dam thing happened, at least as far as stepping into the ring concerned. He dealt with some hand injuries and d some training and some negotiating, but he didn't have single fight as more than a year in the prime of his car passed him by. As excellent as his performance in h career-defining 11th-round knockout of Fernan Vargas was, it's the 15-month layoff that makes De L Hoya's sharp, controlled, and ultimately brutal showi truly remarkable.

If there was any rust on Oscar, he must have be squirted down with a magic oil can in the dressing roo because it didn't show one bit. He boxed patiently ear spotting Vargas a few rounds while the younge stronger man wore himself out, and then De La Ho turned up the intensity of his attack, battering his ri with quick-strike rights before finishing him off with l hooks.

There's no question that De La Hoya was the Figh of the Month. Let's just hope we don't have to w another 15 issues before he vies for the honor again.

• • • •

Oscar De La Hoya

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Roy Jones KO 6 Clinton Woods

Portland, Oregon: In yet another Jones fight where the emphasis was on everything but the overmatched opponent, the light heavyweight champion seemed more focused on impressing his friends from the Portland-based Nike corporation and his basketball pals from the Portland Trailblazers than he was on challenger Woods. With a ring entrance that included dancing girls and some unconvincing lip-synching by the champ, Jones tried to give the 16,229 that gathered at the Rose Garden a show, just in case they didn't get much of one in the ring—as is often the case with Jones.

But someone "musta forgot" to tell Woods, 30, that it was a show and not a fight, because he actually battled aggressively and caught Jones, 33, with clean punches a few times along the ropes. But Jones, 174¾, Pensacola, Florida, did his thing anyway, pumping shots into Woods, 174, Sheffield, England, from all angles and forcing a stoppage before the surprisingly entertaining affair had a chance to grow dull.

Other than a very slight swelling over Jones' right eye, Woods' punches failed to cause Jones any damage, but the message was sent: Woods would not bow meekly to Jones' far superior speed and talent. Trudging forward, Woods, 32-2 (19), made the fight interesting through the first three rounds, and may even have won the third. Forcing Jones to the ropes, Woods landed several decent shots, and wound up hitting the champ with 32 punches in the round, according to CompuBox.

That assault seemed to wake up Jones, and in the fourth, he reestablished himself, blasting Woods with combinations and making the Englishman's face begin to swell. Jones went down to the body with intensity in the fifth, delivering a thudding left hook to the liver that had Woods backpedaling. Woods only connected on two punches in the round.

Sensing that the game Brit was faltering, Jones, 47-1 (38), turned up the pressure in the sixth. Playing to the crowd, Jones launched an unconventional assault, firing lead uppercuts and rights from his waistline. As the battered Woods tried vainly to cover up, his manager, Dennis Hobson, got the attention of referee Jay Nady (USA) and stopped the fight at the 1:29 mark of the sixth.

"People said this guy is a bum … I would never call a guy with the heart to come in here a bum," Jones said afterward of his heavily criticized opponent. The win marked Jones' seventh successful defense of the unified 175-pound title.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Square Ring

(9-07-02)

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

Jones celebrates as Woods is halted after a game effort

Winky Wright W Disq. 8 Bronco McKart

Portland, Oregon: Fighting clever southpaw Wright is a nightmare for any opponent. But for poor McKart, it's a recurring nightmare, with Wright becoming his own personal Freddy Krueger.

Every time these guys fight, it just gets worse for McKart. In May '96, Wright beat him by split decision. In the September '00 rematch, Wright dominated and captured a near-shutout decision. And in the third fight of the series, at the Rose Garden on the undercard of Roy Jones-Clinton Woods, McKart didn't even last the distance, fouling out on low blows in the eighth rather than enduring a full 12 rounds of frustration and punishment.

Wright, making his second defense of the IBF junior middleweight title, got off to a slow start, and the first three rounds were all close and difficult to score. McKart, 153½, Monroe, Michigan, seemed to edge the second round with good bodywork, but Wright, 153¾, St. Petersburg, Florida, who was sharp with his jab but was misfiring with everything else early, started landing straight lefts, left uppercuts, and right hooks in the third, and controlled every minute of the fight from there on out.

In the fourth, a clash of heads—the fourth of the fight between the two lefthanders—temporarily stalled the action, but when they went back to work, Wright, 30, was just too slick and too quick, and McKart began straying low with his punches. Early in round six, after two previous warnings, referee Mike Fischer (USA) took a point away from the 31-year-old challenger due to a low blow. Later in the round, McKart sunk below the belt again and lost a second point. Moments later, with Wright effectively and legally working over his ribcage, McKart lost control and went blatantly low with a right hand. This time, Fischer strangely let him off with a warning.

Another McKart right hand went low in the seventh, and Fischer chose to take another point rather than call for a disqualification, which is the more standard procedure when a fighter has already lost two points for the same infraction. Later in the round, a big left hand from Wright backed McKart into the ropes, and

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

Wright fires a left at outclassed McKart

McKart's counterattack fell harmlessly on the defensively adept Wright's gloves. McKart lost another point for a low right hand in the eighth, and Wright yelled for his opponent to "keep 'em up," not wanting the fight to end that way. But another low blow followed, and after Fischer took a fifth penalty point, he asked McKart if he wanted to fight on. The Michigan man simply turned away and threw his mouthpiece in disgust, forcing Fischer to call a halt at the 2:33 mark. It probably should have gone into the books as a TKO, but the ref ruled it a DQ.

"After he started getting winded and I started hurting him with my left hand, he started going low and kept going low," said Wright, 44-3 (25). "I could understand one or two low blows, but he hit me low six times."

McKart, 45-4 (29), explained his actions by saying he simply got aggravated. Never fighting Wright again would be the best way to ease that.

Television: HBO

Promoters: Square Ring, Duva Boxing

(9-7-02)

Masamori Tokuyama KO 6 Erik Lopez

Saitama, Japan: Tokuyama, 114¾, Osaka, Japan, via North Korea, retained the WBC super flyweight belt for the fifth time since winning it in 2000, making such good use of left uppercuts to the face that he completely closed the right eye of Mexican Lopez, 115, and halted him at the end of the sixth round.

The much taller Tokuyama kept his distance and utilized his left hand to keep the challenger from coming into the range. Lopez, 17-13-3 (13), attempted to land roundhouse punches, but couldn't catch the elusive titleholder.

Referee Frank Cappuccino (USA) had the 27-year-old Lopez' badly swollen eye examined by a ring physician after the sixth, and then wisely declared a halt. At that point, judge Oren Shellenberger (USA) had it scored 60-54, while Gerald Ritter (USA) and Franz Marti (Thailand) both saw it 59-55, all for Tokuyama.

The 27-year-old Tok yama, 27-2-1 (8), will ma his mandatory defense agai top ranked Gerry Penalosa Osaka in November.

Promoter: Kanazawa Pr motions

(8-26-02)

Joe Koizumi

Eric Lucas W 12 Omar Sheika

Montreal, Quebec: Luca one-punch knockout of Gle Catley for the WBC super mi dleweight title in July '0 wasn't enough to satisfy th critics, and his two subsequ title defenses—an eight round stoppage over an infir ed Dingaan Thobela, and lopsided 12-round hammering of a fossilized Vinny Paz—did eve less to earn him a modicum of respect. But after the clinic he p on against the dynamite-fisted Sheika, more than a few exper finally came away mulling the French-Canadian's prospec against the division's elite.

Never mind that Sheika, 167, showed a propensity for swellin and cutting early in bouts, as he did in controversial stoppage los es to Joe Calzaghe in '00 and Thomas Tate in '01. As long as h was in the fight, his knockout capability established him as a legit mate threat, and it was widely held that he was, at all times, on one debilitating left hook or right cross from flattening Lucas.

In truth, the unanimous decision logged by Montreal's Luca 166¾, was a lopsided affair, as he tamed Sheika from the outs with a spearing jab and deft head movement and never allowed th Paterson, New Jersey, bomber into the fight.

Aware that he was susceptible to an ambush along the ropes, m the early stages Lucas kept the action at center ring, wher Sheika's punches carved air and rarely found their mari Deafening cheers from 13,200 fans inside the Bell Centre descen ed from the rafters each time the hometown fighter snapp Sheika's head back with a stiff jab or spun his head with left hook

"The strategy was to outbox him," Lucas, 36-4-3 (1 explained the day after the win. "I didn't really believe I cou intimidate Sheika, so the strategy was more to frustrate him."

A pulverizing left hook by Sheika late in the third provided th only tense moments in the fight for the 31-year-old Lucas. He w visibly shaken and was forced to fall into a clinch from the blo Emboldened by the punch, Sheika, 25, swarmed Lucas along th ropes and landed a fierce right uppercut before a thunderous left hoo backed him off. The ensuing toe-to-toe exchange provided the mo thrilling action of the fight, as Lucas absorbed several more hook while banging home a solid right lead of his own. As the roun expired and the fighters exchanged nods of mutual respect, Sheika only legitimate opportunity to score a win slipped from his grasp.

"I'm asking for an investigation," Sheika's manager, Lou Duv

Sheika runs into a face-contorting right from Lucas

quipped afterward. "I wanna know whether that chin of Lucas' is concrete or steel!"

Whatever the substance of his chin, Lucas kept it clear of Sheika's whistling hooks as the fight progressed. He consistently dipped below punches and withdrew from exchanges on spry legs after engaging Sheika with sharper blows.

But Sheika, who had previously never been past the eighth round, showed respectable stamina and remained dangerous deep into the fight. With his title hopes dwindling, he came out blazing in the 11th and mounted one more sustained offensive, trapping Lucas along the ropes and raking him with sweeping hooks. But the momentum tilted back in Lucas' favor by the end of the round, and he controlled the 12th, beating Sheika into a full retreat to decisively capture the win.

Although crestfallen in the aftermath, Sheika had nothing but praise for Lucas, who will travel to Germany in December to defend against former titlist Markus Beyer.

"I make no excuses. I'm not that type of fighter. Eric Lucas fought a great fight," a disappointed Sheika, 23-4 (16), conceded. "I believe he's the only fighter that really beat me. He can take a very good punch and he's slicker than I thought."

Judges Harold Laurens (Curacao) and David Chung (Korea) rendered cards of 117-111, while Juan Guerra (Mexico) scored 119-109, all in favor of Lucas. THE RING scored 118-110 for Lucas.

Referee Lupe Garcia (Mexico) presided over the action.

Television: ESPN2

Promoters: Interbox, Duva Boxing

(9-6-02)

Paul Salgado

Wayne McCullough KO 4 Johannes Maisa

London, England: Almost two years after being declared unfit to box by the British Boxing Board of Control, a decision that was finally reversed in June under the weight of overwhelming medical evidence to the contrary, McCullough, 125, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Belfast, Northern Ireland, made an emotional return to a British ring and stopped Maisa, 125½, London, England, via South Africa, in the fourth round of a scheduled 10 at York Hall. The 32-year-old Irishman hopes to challenge for a title by the summer of 2003.

In the fall of 2000, told that one more punch could kill him, he believed his career was over. But neurological experts at UCLA examined his brain scan and determined that the cyst lodged against his skull is in fact benign. The British Board's own neurosurgeon, Peter Richards, agreed that "Wayne McCullough is at no greater risk than any other boxer." The Nevada State Athletic Commission cleared him to fight Alvin Brown in January '02, and he stopped the American in two rounds. His demons were gone. When he skipped into the York Hall ring before an enthusiastic crowd that extended an overwhelming welcome to the former bantamweight titleholder, it represented his vindication.

"I felt like it was a new beginning for me, a second chance, and I was going to grab it," he said.

Maisa, 17-4 (11), had trained for the fight since May, as they were originally meant to meet in June. He came prepared and, from the opening bell, clearly fancied the job, matching "The Pocket Rocket" punch for punch and forcing McCullough to take a step back to evaluate exactly what he had in front of him. In the second round, Maisa, 26, ducked low and, coming out of his crouch, knocked his head into McCullough's right cheekbone. As well as raising a bump on the Irishman's face, it raised his anger and the volume of punches, and their ferocity soon swung the fight irrevocably in McCullough's favor.

A left hook to Maisa's body in round three took his wind completely. McCullough upped the pace and took charge, firing both hands into Maisa's head and body in his customary relentless way. He just kept punching until referee Richie Davies (England) had had enough, just like Maisa, at 2:12 of the fourth round. McCullough had already thrown 500 punches.

"The fight was great for me," said McCullough, 25-3 (16). "I wanted a few rounds and to shake off some ring rust, and I was able to do that. I threw some hard shots, worked the body, and was able to throw a lot of combinations I've been working on. I enjoyed myself and can't wait to fight again."

Promoter Frank Warren planned to match McCullough against the winner of the October 19 featherweight fight between WBO beltholder Julio Pablo Chacon and Scotland's Scott Harrison early in the new year, but McCullough hoped to have a few more warm-up bouts first. The Irishman's preference is to fight for a title at junior featherweight after two failed attempts at landing the WBC 122-pound belt against Daniel Zaragoza and Erik Morales.

"I feel that 2003 will be my year," he said.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Sports Network

(9-14-02)

Brian Doogan ■

ALPHABET RATINGS

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS
(Ratings as of August 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: John Ruiz (USA)
1. Evander Holyfield (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Larry Donald (USA)
4. Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)
5. Hasim Rahman (USA)
6. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)
7. Fres Oquendo (PR)
8. Jameel McCline (USA)
9. David Tua (NZ)
10. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
11. Mike Tyson (USA)
12. Faruq Saleem (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
2. James Toney (USA)
3. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
4. Virgil Hill (USA)
5. O'Neil Bell (USA)
6. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
7. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
8. Luis Pineda (PAN)
9. Valery Brudov (RUS)
10. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
11. Ravea Springs (USA)
12. Louis Azille (GUY)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
Champ: Bruno Girard (FRA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Lou Del Valle (USA)
4. David Telesco (USA)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. Reggie Johnson (USA)
7. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
8. Manuel Siaca (PR)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Rocky Torres (USA)
11. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
12. Rodney Moore (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Byron Mitchell (USA)
1. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
2. Antwun Echols (USA)
3. David Starie (GB)
4. Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)
5. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
6. Danilo Haussler (GER)
7. Thomas Tate (USA)
8. Markus Beyer (GER)
9. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
10. Rick Thornberry (AUSTRL)
11. Zafarou Ballogou (TOG)
12. Nordin Ben Salah (NETH)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Bert Schenk (GER)
3. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
4. Robert Allen (USA)
5. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
6. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
7. Howard Eastman (GB)
8. Erland Betare (FRA)
9. Evans Ashira (DEN)
10. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
11. Keith Holmes (USA)
12. Lee Blundell (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Oscar De La Hoya
Champ: Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
1. Vacant
2. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
3. Angel Hernandez (USA)
4. Fernando Vargas (USA)
5. Travis Simms (USA)
6. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
7. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
8. Michael Rask (DEN)
9. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
10. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
11. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
12. Andrei Pestriaev (RUS)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
1. Vacant
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Michael Trabant (GER)
4. Jose Rivera (USA)
5. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
6. Vince Phillips (USA)
7. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
8. Danny Perez (USA)
9. Cory Spinks (USA)
10. Frederic Klose (FRA)
11. Felix Flores (PR)
12. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
1. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
2. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
3. Ricky Hatton (GB)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Randall Bailey (USA)
6. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
7. Micky Ward (USA)
8. Zab Judah (USA)
9. Ener Julio (COL)
10. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
11. Antonio Mesquita (BRA)
12. James Leija (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Leonard Dorin (CAN)
1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
3. Lakva Sim (MON)
4. Juan Lazcano (USA)
5. Raul Balbi (ARG)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
8. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
9. Angel Manfredy (USA)
10. Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)
11. Colin Dunne (GB)
12. Alex Trujillo (USA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Acelino Freitas (BRA)
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
1. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
2. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
3. Phillip Ndou (SA)
4. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
5. Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)
6. Silvano Usini (ITA)
7. Carlos Hernandez (SAL)
8. Jesus Chavez (MEX)
9. Nate Campbell (USA)
10. Yong Soo Choi (KOR)
11. Randy Suico (PHIL)
12. Nobuto Honmo (JAP)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Derrick Gainer (USA)
1. Daniel Seda (PR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Injin Chi (KOR)
6. Antonio Cermeno (VEN)
7. Lewis Woods (US)
8. Chris John (IND)
9. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
10. Spend Abazi (DEN)
11. Victor Polo (COL)
12. Oscar Leon (COL)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Osamu Sato (JAP)
1. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
2. Paulie Ayala (USA)
3. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
4. Yober Ortega (VEN)
5. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
6. Johnny Armour (GB)
7. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
8. Michael Brodie (GB)
9. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
10. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
11. Napapol Kiattisachokchai (THAI)
12. Israel Vasquez (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
1. Leo Gamez (VEN)
2. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
3. Eidy Moya (VEN)
4. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
5. Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)
6. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
7. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
8. Genaro Garcia (USA)
9. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
10. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
11. Moises Castro (NIC)
12. Danny Romero (USA)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
3. Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)
4. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
5. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
6. Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)
7. Luis Bolanos (COL)
8. Luis Perez (NIC)
9. Takuya Kiya (JAP)
10. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
11. Meiji C.P. Gym (THAI)
12. Sot Sor Veerapol (THAI)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Morel (USA)
1. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
2. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
3. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
4. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
5. Damaen Kelly (GB)
6. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
7. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
8. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
9. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
10. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
11. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Peter Culshaw (GB)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
2. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
3. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
4. Masibulele Makepula (SA)
5. Alex Sanchez (PR)
6. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
7. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
8. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
9. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
10. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
11. Tatsuo Kayashida (JAP)
12. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Noel Arambulet (VEN)
1. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
2. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
3. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
4. Khulile Makeba (SA)
5. Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)
6. Manasak Yoothakit (THAI)
7. Daniel Reyes (COL)
8. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
9. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
10. Pornsawan Pramuk (THAI)
11. Wandee Charoen (THAI)
12. Juan Landaeta (VEN)

WBC RATINGS
(Ratings as of August 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. Hasim Rahman (USA)
4. Mike Tyson (USA)
5. Jameel McCline (USA)
6. David Tua (NZ)
7. Fres Oquendo (USA)
8. Chris Byrd (USA)
9. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
10. Danny Williams (GB)
11. Clifford Etienne (USA)
12. Jeremy Williams (USA)
13. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
14. Lamon Brewster (USA)
15. Tim Witherspoon (USA)
16. Michael Moorer (USA)
17. Ray Mercer (USA)
18. Joe Mesi (USA)
19. Larry Donald (USA)
20. Lance Whitaker (USA)
21. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
22. Maurice Harris (USA)
23. Monte Barrett (USA)
24. Brian Nielsen (DEN)
25. Vaughn Bean (USA)
26. Nikolay Valouev (RUS)
27. Timo Hoffman (GB)
28. Dimitry Bakhtov (KAZ)
29. Peter Okhello (UGA)
30. David Defiagbon (CAN)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
2. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
5. Louis Azille (DR)
6. Dale Brown (CAN)
7. James Toney (USA)
8. Sebastiaan Rothmann (SA)
9. Michael Nunn (USA)
10. Turan Bagci (TUR)
11. Carlos Cruzat (CHI)
12. Jason Robinson (USA)
13. Bruce Scott (GB)
14. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
15. Kelvin Davis (USA)
16. Ramon Garbey (USA)
17. Rudiger May (GER)
18. Virgil Hill (USA)
19. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
20. Carl Thompson (GB)
21. Alain Simon (FRA)
22. Krysztov Wlodarczyk (POL)
23. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
24. Guillermo Jones (PAN)
25. Roman Kovalchuk (UKR)
26. Mohamed Ben Guesmia (ALG)
27. Kenny Keene (USA)
28. Frederic Serrat (FRA)
29. Alexander Petkovic (GER)
30. Gregory Drosd (RUS)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Clinton Woods (GB)
2. Yawe Davis (ITA)
3. Antonio Tarver (USA)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. Eric Harding (USA)
6. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
7. Reggie Johnson (USA)
8. Jorge Castro (ARG)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Derrick Harmon (USA)
11. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
12. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
13. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
14. David Telesco (USA)
15. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
16. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
17. Mario Tonus (ITA)
18. Silvio Branco (ITA)
19. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
20. Demetrius Jenkins (USA)
21. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
22. Stipe Drews (CRO)
23. George Jones (USA)
24. Arturo Rivera (MEX)
25. Alejandro Lakatus (ROM)
26. Rocky Torres (USA)
27. Sergio Baez (ARG)
28. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
29. Tony Oakey (GB)
30. Julian Letterlough (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Lucas (CAN)
1. Markus Beyer (GER)
2. David Starie (GB)
3. Danilo Haussler (GER)
4. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
5. Antwun Echols (USA)
6. Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)
7. Glenn Catley (GB)
8. Dingaan Thobela (SA)
9. Omar Sheika (USA)
10. Jurgen Brahmer (GER)
11. Mehdi Sanoune (FRA)
12. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
13. Dan Batchelder (USA)
14. Henry Porras (CR)
15. Robin Reid (GB)
16. Brian Magee (GB)
17. Mario Veit (GER)
18. Anthony Hanshaw (USA)
19. Scott Pemberton (USA)
20. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
21. Sam Hill (USA)
22. Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)
23. James Lubwana (UGA)
24. David Reid (USA)
25. Vinny Paz (USA)
26. Juan Nelongo (SPA)
27. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
28. Jeff Lacy (USA)
29. Ross Thompson (USA)
30. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Erland Betare (FRA)
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
4. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
5. Naotaka Hozumi (JAP)
6. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
7. Raymond Joval (HOL)
8. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
9. Robert Allen (USA)
10. Raul Marquez (USA)
11. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
12. Alejandro Berrio (COL)
13. Oure Evans (KEN)
14. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
15. Carl Daniels (USA)
16. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
17. Travis Simms (USA)
18. Andras Galfi (HUN)
19. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
20. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
21. Mariano Carrera (ARG)
22. Tony Ayala (USA)
23. Lansana Djallo (BEL)
24. Delroy Leslie (GB)
25. Kingsley Ikeke (CAN)
26. Quentin Smith (USA)
27. Jermain Taylor (USA)
28. Stephan Trabant (GER)
29. Satoru Suzuki (JAP)
30. Maselino Masoe (NZ)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
1. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
2. Nader Hamdan (AUS
3. Bronco McKart (US
4. Roman Karmazin (R
5. Akira Ohigashi (JA
6. Wayne Alexander (J
7. Mamadou Thiam (FR
8. Steve Roberts (GB)
9. Angel Hernandez (U
10. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
11. Richard Williams (J
12. Kassim Ouma (USA)
13. Michael Rask (DEN)
14. Christophe Canclau
15. Alex Bunema (USA)
16. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
17. J.C. Candelo (COL)
18. Sergei Dzindzirak (U
19. Santiago Samaniego
20. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
21. Rodney Jones (USA)
22. Carlos Bojorquez (U
23. Emmett Linton (USA)
24. Sam Garr (USA)
25. Kirino Garcia (MEX)
26. Michael Jones (GB)
27. Joachim Alcine (CA
28. Christopher Henry (J
29. Gary Jones (USA)
30. Joya Kawai (JAP)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vernon Forres
1. Shane Mosley (USA)
2. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG
4. Thomas Damgaard (D
5. Danny Perez (USA)
6. Sergio Martinez (ARG
7. Hercules Kyvelos (CA
8. Manuel Gomez (MEX
9. Rafael Pineda (COL)
10. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
11. Michel Trabant (GER
12. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
13. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
14. Michele Orlando (ITA
15. Christian Bladt (DEN
16. Alexander Vetsov (U
17. Golden Johnson (USA
18. James Hare (GB)
19. Julian Holland (AUST
20. Alessandro Duran (IT
21. Felix Flores (PR)
22. Jeffrey Hill (USA)
23. Hassan Al (DEN)
24. Frederic Klose (FRA
25. Juan Carlos Rubio (M
26. Neil Sinclair (GB)
27. Luther Smith (USA)
28. Charles Whitaker (U
29. Miguel Rodriguez (U
30. Carlos Quintana (PR)

SUPER LIGHTWEI
Champ: Kostya Tszyu
1. Gianluca Branco (IT
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. James Leija (USA)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Micky Ward (USA)
6. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
7. Zab Judah (USA)
8. Omar Weis (ARG)
9. Masakazu Satake (J
10. Hector Camacho Jr
11. Gabriel Mapunka (F
12. Miguel Cotto (PR)
13. Sharmba Mitchell (
14. Eamonn Magee (IR
15. Soulemane M'Baye
16. Ben Tackie (GHA)
17. Golden Johnson (U
18. Ener Julio (COL)
19. Francisco Bojado (M
20. Wilfredo Vilches (P
21. Randall Bailey (USA
22. Mikhail Krivolapov

23. Ricardo Williams (USA)
24. Vince Phillips (USA)
25. Junior Witter (GB)
26. Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)
27. Vivian Harris (USA)
28. Terrence Millett (USA)
29. Pablo Sarmiento (ARG)
30. Fabrice Colombel (FRA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
2. Steve Johnston (USA)
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
5. Carlos Gerena (PR)
6. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
7. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
8. Aldo Rios (ARG)
9. Colin Dunne (GB)
10. Bobby Vanzie (GB)
11. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
12. Sandro Casamonica (ITA)
13. Julian Wheeler (USA)
14. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)
15. Jose Luis Juarez (MEX)
16. Diego Jimenez (ARG)
17. Julio Diaz (USA)
18. Zinzele Mpusula (SA)
19. Miguel Callist (PAN)
20. Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)
21. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
22. Efren Hinojosa (MEX)
23. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)
24. Esteban Mortalez (COL)
25. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
26. Gary Balletto (USA)
27. Sayan Sanchat (RUS)
28. Michael Clark (USA)
29. Steve Murray (GB)
30. Gil Alipio (MEX)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Srimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
2. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Philip Ndou (SA)
5. Randy Suico (PHIL)
6. Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)
7. Affif Djelti (FRA)
8. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
9. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
10. Kevin Kelley (USA)
11. Daniel Alicea (PR)
12. Jorge Paez (MEX)
13. Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)
14. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
15. Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)
16. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
17. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
18. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
19. Mzonke Fana (SA)
20. Orlando Salido (MEX)
21. Nate Campbell (USA)
22. Yongsoo Choi (KOR)
23. Javier Alvarez (ARG)
24. Alex Arthur (GB)
25. Silvano Usini (ITA)
26. Lamont Pearson (USA)
27. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
28. Daniel Attah (NIG)
29. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
30. Ricardo Silva (ARG)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Erik Morales (MEX)
2. Injin Chi (KOR)
3. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Michael Brodie (GB)
6. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
7. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
8. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
9. Scott Harrison (GB)
10. Manuel Medina (MEX)
11. Luis Fuentes (MEX)
12. William Abelyan (USA)
13. Guty Espadas (MEX)
14. Junior Jones (USA)
15. Takalani Noluvo (SA)
16. Panther Yanagida (JAP)
17. Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)
18. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
19. Daniel Seda (PR)
20. Yangsoo Sung (KOR)
21. Orlando Soto (PAN)
22. David Murillo (MEX)
23. Zahir Raheem (USA)
24. Frankie Toledo (USA)
25. Cristobal Cruz (MEX)
26. Roger Medal (NIC)
27. Oscar Leon (COL)
28. Rocky Juarez (USA)
29. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
30. Anthony Tshehla (SA)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Willie Jorrin (USA)
1. Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)
2. Paulie Ayala (USA)
3. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
4. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
5. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
6. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
7. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
8. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
9. Jyunichi Nakazato (JAP)
10. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
11. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)
12. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
13. Bones Adams (USA)
14. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
15. Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)
16. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
17. Youngjin Cho (KOR)
18. David Denis (USA)
19. Jaekwang Chung (KOR)
20. Fabio Oliva (ARG)
21. Yober Ortega (VEN)
22. Wethya Singwangcha (THAI)
23. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
24. Michael Alldis (GB)
25. Frankie Archuleta (USA)
26. Joan Guzman (DR)
27. Turcay Kaya (FRA)
28. Phillip Payne (USA)
29. Norihisa Tomimoto (JAP)
30. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Genaro Garcia (USA)
3. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
4. Jess Maca (PHIL)
5. Diego Morales (MEX)
6. Spend Abazi (DEN)
7. Noel Wilders (GB)
8. David Guerault (FRA)
9. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
10. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
11. Abner Cordero (PHIL)
12. Danny Romero (USA)
13. Julio Zarate (MEX)
14. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
15. Mark Johnson (USA)
16. Julio Gamboa (NIC)
17. Francisco Mateos (MEX)
18. Gerardo Martinez (MEX)
19. Fabien Guillerme (FRA)
20. Kyonchul Park (KOR)
21. Eidy Moya (VEN)
22. Pete Frissina (USA)
23. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
24. Moises Castro (NIC)
25. Nicky Booth (GB)
26. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
27. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
28. Ryuichi Minoriyama (JAP)
29. Steve Molitor (CAN)
30. Eduardo Escobedo (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
2. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
3. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
4. Luis Bolanos (COL)
5. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
6. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
7. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
8. Jose Beranza (MEX)
9. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
10. Sot Sot Veeraphol (THAI)
11. Shingo Sasaki (JAP)
12. Erick Lopez (MEX)
13. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
14. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
15. Luis Perez (NIC)
16. Eiji Kojima (JAP)
17. Takuya Kiya (JAP)
18. Alexander Knight (RUS)
19. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
20. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
21. Erik Barcelona (PHIL)
22. Sergio Santillan (ARG)
23. Julio Coronel (COL)
24. Jovy Oracion (PHIL)
25. Shin Ogata (JAP)
26. Trinidad Mendoza (MEX)
27. Tat Torres (MEX)
28. Lunga Ntontela (SA)
29. Roberto Bonilla (NIC)
30. Jose Navarro (USA)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
4. Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)
5. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
6. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
7. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
8. Hawk Makepula (SA)
9. Gerson Guerrero (MEX)
10. Everardo Morales (MEX)
11. Omar Narvaez (ARG)
12. Damaen Kelly (GB)
13. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
14. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
15. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
16. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
17. Koji Koyama (JAP)
18. Rolly Lunas (PHIL)
19. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
20. Mimoun Chent (FRA)
21. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
22. Hayato Asai (JAP)
23. Gabriel Elizondo (USA)
24. Evaristo Primero (MEX)
25. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
26. Peter Culshaw (GB)
27. Yosuke Morishima (JAP)
28. Gilberto Keb-Baas (MEX)
29. Jason Booth (GB)
30. Gabula Vabaza (SA)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Yosam Choi (KOR)
1. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
2. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Agustin Luna (MEX)
4. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
5. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
6. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
7. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
8. John Molina (COL)
9. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
10. Rodrigo Garcia (MEX)
11. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
12. Victor Burgos (MEX)
13. Alex Sanchez (PR)
14. Pilkoo Kang (KOR)
15. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
16. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
17. Jun Kitano (JAP)
18. Vuyisile Bebe (SA)
19. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
20. Juan Centero (NIC)
21. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
22. Jinho Kim (KOR)
23. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
24. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
25. Minsoo Jang (KOR)
26. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)
27. Omar Nino (MEX)
28. Keisuke Yokoyama (JAP)
29. Steve Msimango (SA)
30. Samransak Singmanassak (THAI)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
1. Khulile Makeba (SA)
2. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
4. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
5. Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)
6. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
7. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
8. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
9. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
10. Juan Palacios (NIC)
11. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
12. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
13. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
14. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
15. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
16. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
17. Jairo Arango (PAN)
18. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
19. Hiroyuki Abe (JAP)
20. Omar Soto (MEX)
21. Eagle Okuda (JAP)
22. Wele Maqolo (SA)
23. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
24. Manny Melchor (PHIL)
25. Valentin Leon (MEX)
26. Fernando Luna (MEX)
27. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
28. Daisuke Iida (JAP)
29. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
30. Decho Bankluaygym (THAI)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of September 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Chris Byrd (USA)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Hasim Rahman (USA)
5. Jameel McCline (USA)
6. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
7. Fres Oquendo (USA)
8. Clifford Etienne (USA)
9. Tim Witherspoon (USA)
10. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
11. Monte Barrett (USA)
12. Tommy Martin (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
1. James Toney (USA)
2. Vacant
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
5. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
6. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
7. Ravea Springs (USA)
8. Jason Robinson (USA)
9. Virgil Hill (USA)
10. Arthur Williams (USA)
11. Kelvin Davis (USA)
12. Dale Brown (CAN)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Montell Griffin (USA)
4. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
5. David Telesco (USA)
6. Derrick Harmon (USA)
7. Eric Harding (USA)
8. Reggie Johnson (USA)
9. Yawe Davis (ITA)
10. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
11. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
12. Jorge Castro (ARG)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Antwun Echols (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Danilo Haussler (GER)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. David Starie (GB)
6. Thomas Tate (USA)
7. Markus Beyer (GER)
8. Charles Brewer (USA)
9. Glenn Catley (GB)
10. Richard Grant (USA)
11. Fernando Zuniga (USA)
12. Mikkel Kessler (GER)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Robert Allen (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Carl Daniels (USA)
4. Erland Betare (FRA)
5. Raymond Joval (HOL)
6. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
7. Bert Schenk (GER)
8. Howard Eastman (GB)
9. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
10. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
11. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
12. Ali Ennebati (FRA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Angel Hernandez (USA)
4. Alex Bunema (USA)
5. Andrei Pestriaev (RUS)
6. Kassim Ouma (USA)
7. Bronco McKart (USA)
8. J.C. Candelo (COL)
9. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
10. Travis Simms (USA)
11. Steve Roberts (GB)
12. Michael Rask (DEN)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
1. Cory Spinks (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
5. Shane Mosley (USA)
6. Jose Rivera (USA)
7. Rafael Pineda (COL)
8. James Hare (ENG)
9. Antonio Diaz (MEX)
10. Jose Celaya (USA)
11. Kermit Cintron (USA)
12. Robert Frazier (USA)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Micky Ward (USA)
4. Arturo Gatti (USA)
5. Emanuel Augustus (USA)
6. Zab Judah (USA)
7. Ben Tackie (GHA)
8. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
9. Omar Weis (ARG)
10. Carlos Vilches (ARG)
11. James Leija (USA)
12. Randall Bailey (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Paul Spadafora (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Angel Manfredy (USA)
5. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Julian Wheeler (USA)
8. Leavander Johnson (USA)
9. Alex Trujillo (PR)
10. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
11. Dorin Spivey (USA)
12. Stefano Zoff (ITA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Steve Forbes (USA)
2. David Santos (USA)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Carlos Hernandez (USA)
5. Joel Casamayor (USA)
6. Nate Campbell (USA)
7. Phillip Ndou (SA)
8. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
9. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
10. Orlando Salido (MEX)
11. Daniel Alicea (USA)
12. Lamont Pearson (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Tapia (USA)
1. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
2. Manuel Medina (MEX)
3. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
4. Oscar Leon (PR)
5. Frankie Toledo (USA)
6. Michael Brodie (ENG)
7. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
8. William Abelyan (USA)
9. Victor Polo (COL)
10. Naseem Hamed (ENG)
11. Istvan Kovacs (HUN)
12. David Toledo (USA)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
4. F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)
5. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
6. Paulie Ayala (USA)
7. Fernando Velardez (USA)
8. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
9. Jorge Eliecer Julio (COL)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. David Donis (USA)
12. Bones Adams (USA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Tim Austin (USA)
1. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
2. Vacant
3. Pete Frissina (USA)
4. Diego Morales (MEX)
5. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
6. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
7. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
8. Adan Vargas (MEX)
9. Danny Romero (USA)
10. Mark Johnson (USA)
11. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
12. Toshiaki Nakajima (JAP)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Felix Machado (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Martin Castillo (MEX)
4. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
5. Luis Bolano (COL)
6. Ricardo Vargas (USA)
7. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
8. Samson 3K-Battery (THAI)
9. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
10. Fahsung 3K-Battery (THAI)
11. Kobayashi Yosuke (JAP)
12. Oscar Andrade (MEX)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Damaen Kelly (GB)
4. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
5. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
6. Wandee Chareon (THAI)
7. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
8. David Guerault (FRA)
9. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
10. Mike Trejo (USA)
11. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
12. Angel Priolo (COL)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Lopez (MEX)
1. Jose Burgos (MEX)
2. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
3. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
4. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
5. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
6. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
7. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
8. Will Grigsby (USA)
9. Juan Keb Baas (MEX)
10. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
11. Celso Danggud (PHIL)
12. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Miguel Barrera (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Daniel Reyes (COL)
4. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
5. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
6. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
7. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
8. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
9. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
10. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
11. Sarikalrk Ekarin (THAI)
12. Isaac Bustos (MEX)

CLASSIC

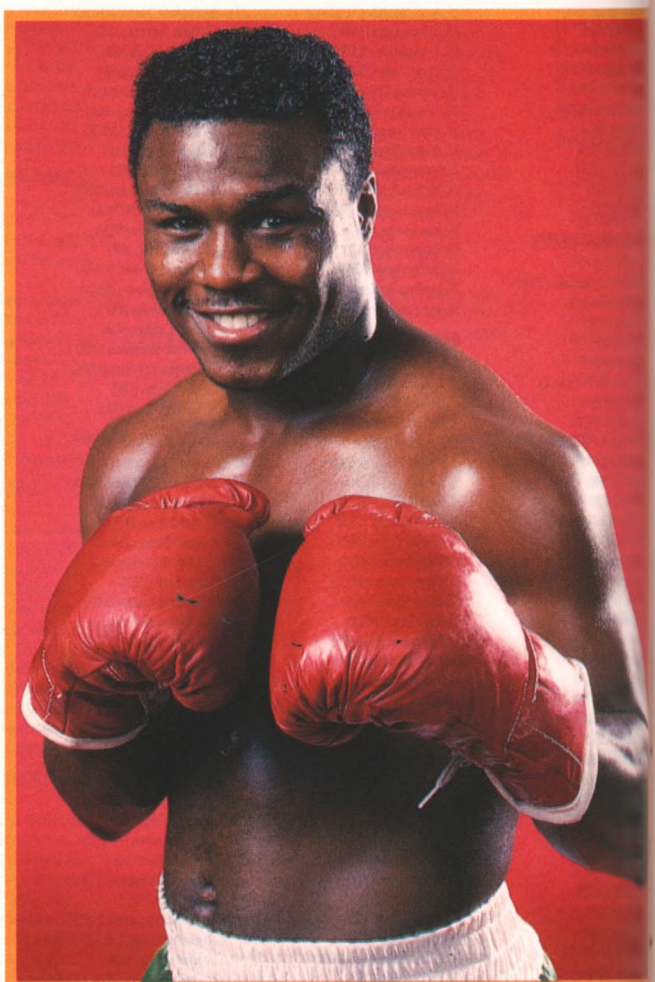
From THE RING, January 1989

MELDRICK TAYLOR: LATEST PHILLY PHENOMENON

New IBF Champ's Success Rooted In Hometown Tradition

By J.R. Jowett

The merry weekenders nestled into their plush and vinyl booths at glittery Harrah's Marina, standing in haughty isolation beside Atlantic City's Absecon Bay. Something like patrician Romans, the "sellout" gathering of some 850 had come to witness a bit of sacrifice. The young lion of a champion, hewn in 40 battles in and out of boxing's self-styled hub of New York, had been on a fearsome tear since avenging his lone defeat. The youthful challenger, out of provincial Philadelphia, had just half that many encounters, marred by a solitary draw. His reputation seemed to consist mostly of Olympic gold and good p.r., his last impressive win nearly out of memory. A straw poll of ringside "experts" had him gone in a roll of the dice ...



The talent pool of standout Philadelphia fighters was gradually shrinking in the late-1980s, but Meldrick Taylor gave the tough city some hope. Looking to establish himself as the latest in a long line of great Philly fighters, Taylor faced IBF junior welterweight titlist James "Buddy" McGirt.

A perfect spring evening in late-May played host to 5,100 eager fans, out for the closing of the boxing "season" in pre-air-conditioning times. It'll take the Second Coming to provide a better finale. Openly orchestrated through a series of club victories over the winter months, two local middleweights were meeting at Philadelphia's stately old marble and wood-grained Convention Hall. There was no official sanction, but everybody knew it was a championship ...

Despite McGirt's experience edge over Taylor, it was Taylor who took command of the bout in the fourth round. Taylor did a nice job of melding his old inside amateur style with the new long-range style.

Meldrick Taylor wasn't even born when the above encounter slipped and "combinated" its way into boxing legend. And the tradition it represented was down to its last hurrah by the time he laced on his first pair of gloves, even though he was only nine. Yet the Philly Effect still drew him in, if only by second remove. Meldrick's older brother, Myron, had been a veritable child prodigy and was moving toward a promising pro career. And that was all it took.

"He was the only person I knew that was good," Taylor remembers. "I was idolizing my brother."

The first rustle of disquiet came as early as the introductions. While the challenger was dead on-target for the 140-pound title, the champion was a pound-and-three-quarters shy. The raised eyebrows became bug-eyes soon after, when the champion exploded out, obviously intent on putting the upstart in his place. A savage burst strafed the challenger, but there would be no repeat of the champion's one-round defense just 34 days prior. Though the champion won the skirmish, it was the challenger who finished it off with a double left hook, and some unknown within the champion strangely blew retreat. Before the first round was over, the knowledgeable were becoming suspicious that there'd be a new champ ...

Meldrick followed Myron to the Hennelly Boys' Club, where he was trained by the revered Mickey Grandinetti and someone he remembers only as "Mr. Renn." With Myron's fame preceding him, and twin Eldrick at his side, he was soon part of a popular brother act that rolled up more wins than "Dizzy" and "Daffy" Dean. From then on, boxing was a singular passion. Though he grew up in what he describes only as a "tough neighborhood," there had to be enough street-fights to teach the predatory some respect. Gang violence was rife, but Meldrick was a little too young to be ensnared.

"I was mostly trying to avoid being in the middle between the older guys," he recalled. By the time he was old enough to get into trouble, he was tough enough to stay out. "I definitely had a reputation," he said. "If somebody was thinking of fighting me, somebody'd say, 'He's a boxer, man. He's gonna hurt you.'"

Brisk action in the third went to the inside, with the challenger reverting to his bustling amateur style. But there was a difference. His rocking body wove skillfully between and around the champion's punches, his own shots all the while threading the needle with pinpoint accuracy ...

Character-building gym wars took the place of vengefully destructive street-fights. Philly is known for them like no other city, and Meldrick got his share upon settling into Joe Frazier's gym.

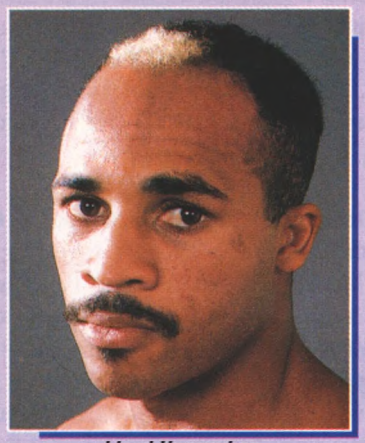
"Once you stepped inside the ring, it was like a real fight," he confirmed. "The other guy always had to prove he was better than you. It didn't make no difference your weight, your experience, or who you were."

Critics charge the notorious gym wars ruin fighters, but you won't get that from Taylor.

"If you could deal with anybody in Philly, then you were accomplishing something. You were a complete fighter," he declared.

While training for the 1984 Olympics, Taylor hadn't given much thought to a pro career. But after Taylor garnered Olympic gold, Shelly Finkel (far left), in partnership with Dan Duva, helped him on his path to pro glory, signing Taylor, along with fellow '84 Olympians Evander Holyfield and Pernell Whitaker.

THE RING RATINGS, January 1989



Lloyd Honeyghan

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Mike Tyson, New Jersey
1. **Evander Holyfield,** Georgia
2. **Carl Williams,** New Jersey
3. **Tim Witherspoon,** Pennsylvania
4. **Adilson Rodrigues,** Brazil
5. **Tony Tucker,** Michigan
6. **Donovan Ruddock,** Canada
7. **Michael Dokes,** Ohio
8. **Pinklon Thomas,** Michigan
9. **James Douglas,** Ohio
10. **Orlin Norris,** California

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Charles Williams,** Ohio
2. **Virgil Hill,** North Dakota
3. **Dennis Andries,** England
4. **Don Lalonde,** Canada
5. **Tony Willis,** Illinois
6. **Bobby Czyz,** New Jersey
7. **Fulgencio Obelmejias,** Venezuela
8. **Chong-Pal Park,** Korea
9. **Lindell Holmes,** Michigan
10. **Graciano Rocchigiani,** Germany

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sumbu Kalambay, Italy
1. **Michael Nunn,** California
2. **Iran Barkley,** New York
3. **Thomas Hearns,** Michigan
4. **Frank Tate,** Texas
5. **Herol Graham,** England
6. **Mike McCallum,** Jamaica
7. **Matthew Hilton,** Canada
8. **Donald Curry,** Texas
9. **Julian Jackson,** Virgin Islands
10. **Gianfranco Rossi,** Italy

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lloyd Honeyghan, England
1. **Simon Brown,** Washington, D.C.
2. **Thomas Molinares,** Colombia
3. **Marlon Starling,** Connecticut
4. **Maurice Blocker,** Washington, D.C.
5. **Mark Breland,** New York
6. **Roger Mayweather,** Nevada
7. **Meldrick Taylor,** Pennsylvania
8. **Juan Martin Coggi,** Argentina
9. **Manning Galloway,** Ohio
10. **Harold Brazier,** Indiana

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Greg Haugen,** Washington
3. **Pernell Whitaker,** Virginia
4. **Jose Luis Ramirez,** Mexico
5. **Edwin Rosario,** Puerto Rico
6. **Amancio Castro,** Colombia
7. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
8. **Tony Lopez,** California
9. **Anthony Jones,** Michigan
10. **Rocky Lockridge,** New Jersey

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Esparragoza, Venezuela
1. **Jeff Fenech,** Australia
2. **Jorge Paez,** Mexico
3. **Calvin Grove,** Pennsylvania
4. **Marcos Villasana,** Mexico
5. **Juan Jose Estrada,** Mexico
6. **Jeff Franklin,** Nevada
7. **Hector Lopez,** Mexico
8. **Bernardo Pinango,** Venezuela
9. **Louie Espinoza,** Arizona
10. **George Navarro,** New Jersey

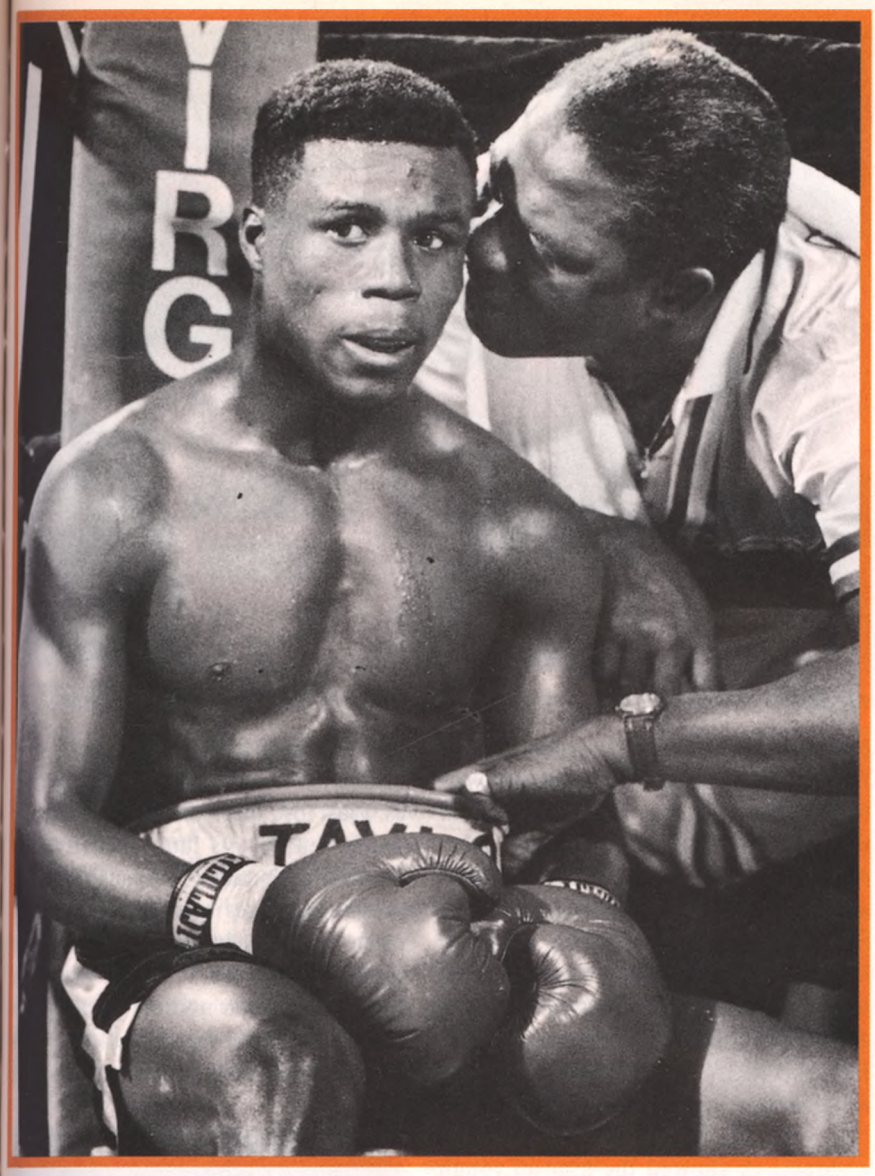
BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Miguel Lora,** Colombia
2. **Khaosai Galaxy,** Thailand
3. **Gilberto Roman,** Mexico
4. **Orlando Canizales,** Texas
5. **Raul Perez,** Mexico
6. **Sung-Kil Moon,** Korea
7. **Santos Laciar,** Argentina
8. **Kelvin Seabrooks,** South Carolina
9. **Khaokor Galaxy,** Thailand
10. **Sugar Baby Rojas,** Colombia

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Yong-Kang Kim, Korea
1. **Jung-Koo Chang,** Korea
2. **Sot Chitalada,** Thailand
3. **Fidel Bassa,** Colombia
4. **Myung-Woo Yuh,** Korea
5. **Hilario Zapata,** Panama
6. **Rolando Bohol,** Philippines
7. **Dodie Penalosa,** Philippines
8. **Duke McKenzie,** England
9. **Miguel Mercedes,** Dominican Republic
10. **Humberto Gonzalez,** Mexico

By the fourth, the challenger had taken startling command. The shifts between his old inside milling and new long-range boxing were so facile as to be seamless. When the champion finally broke through with a crackling left hook, the upstart replied with a body flurry and a combo to the head that smacked of "take that!" impudence. A round later, the relaxed challenger seemed to be positively enjoying himself, while the dispirited champion looked beaten ...

The veteran middleweights, a silken boxer who could "disappear in front of you," and a wanton puncher who could make you disappear, had a century of bouts between them, and a score of losses. But those would vanish like sins after confession with a win on this night ...

Still a kid when he hit the high road to the Olympics, Meldrick hadn't given much thought to a pro career. But others at Frazier's gym had. It took his principle amateur trainer, Willie Rush, to keep him on the path to gold. Like the yellow brick road, there were other travelers to be met. One was Shelly Finkel. By the time Meldrick garnered the '84 gold medal, he had been corralled as part of Finkel and partner Dan



Former Philly middleweight George Benton took over Taylor's training from Willie Rush and imparted on Taylor the importance of the jab, lateral movement, and how to think in the ring.

Duva's sparkling Olympic roundup. Two fights into his pro career, Rush's contract was bought out and Taylor was introduced to his new trainer, Georgie Benton.

With the stubbornness of a southern governor, the champion held fast. He mounted a gallant rally of his diminishing physical forces in the sixth. But with his punches lacking zip, the challenger was able to outscore him with a nonchalance that looked almost cavalier. After a couple of playful rounds, he seemed to be fighting boredom.

In a triumph of art over life, but with nothing of imitation, the boxer spun out a fabric that sportswriter Jack Fried described as that of a " bona fide boxing genius" who "came through with 24-carat brilliance." The puncher's rockets exploded in mid-air like a dazzling display of fireworks. And with the same damage...

Benton began what was not a transition, but a melding of styles. He saw Taylor as a "busy kid with fast hands who threw punches," but was "very easily hit." He designed to give Meldrick a repertoire of skills to supplement his arsenal of physical gifts; to teach crafts like the jab, lateral movement, how to think. But never to detract from any of the abilities that had been good enough to take him to the pinnacle as an amateur.

"He was made for me," Benton enthused. "Easy to work with, so many things going for him: speed, reflexes, a good mind. You have to beat a style. I can come up with something for Meldrick, and he can follow it to a T."

Benton and co-trainer Lou Duva did, indeed, "come up with something," which was "followed to a T" in the stellar win over "Cubanito" Perez. Meldrick will box and move to tire out a fresh opponent who might otherwise mete out withering punishment in toe-to-toe exchanging. Then, he moves inside, where his vaunted hand speed can outscore the weakened foe to nail down the victory.

The challenger's defenses were finally breached by three right hands in the ninth. The champion's determination alone was keeping the fight alive, but only for those who believe in miracles ...

In the ninth, the boxer's vast skills finally converged like an alignment of the stars. Crushing body blows froze the puncher long enough to be felled by a picture combination to the head. With little to gain but the act itself, he made it to his feet. If this could be viewed as an infraction, the boxer was noticeably lenient in his punishment. It was the matador sparing the bull, the emperor turning thumbs up. Everyone in the house knew it, and its effect swept the crowd with the force of a knockout ...

But while he may be trained by a Philadelphian, Meldrick's management has been strictly cosmopolitan. His 21 outings have taken place in 13 venues, but none closer to home than Atlantic City. And that's probably as close as he'll ever get. The economics just don't seem to be there.

Says hometown promoter Russell Peltz, "There's no track record. Why is Meldrick Taylor all of a sudden gonna draw 10,000 when we had to take two to three years to build Cyclone Hart and Bennie Briscoe? People have gotten out of the habit of spending money for fights."

That wouldn't be good news to Taylor.

"Fighting everywhere else and not ever at home can be a down feeling," he admitted. But, claims Peltz, "When people think of Philadelphia fighters, they think of bigger punchers than Meldrick Taylor, so I don't think he's what they'd call a Philadelphia fighter."

That may be open to dispute.

The victory over McGirt set up possible big-money matchups with either Hector Camacho (left) or Julio Cesar Chavez (right) for Taylor.

A right stung the challenger behind the ear to open the 11th, but it was like sticking your tongue out at a bully. It only galvanized the final assault. Despite signs of tiring himself, the challenger assembled a punishing barrage. The champion finally hit the canvas for the first and only time early in the 12th. Though only a slip, the evidence of exhaustion signaled the challenger like a flare. He launched a relentless shelling that had the champion out on his feet, bleeding from nose and eye. Hardly known for tenderness, hard-bitten manager Al Certo uncharacteristically bulleted through the ropes and saved referee Randy Neumann the unpleasant responsibility of ending James "Buddy" McGirt's brief reign.

It wouldn't have made a difference in the outcome. Vinnie Rainone had it 108-101, John Stewart 107-103, and Richard F. Murry 106-103, all for the new champion. What had been apparent barely a minute into the fight became realization only after a memorable struggle, just 1:00 short of completion. Meldrick Taylor became the IBF junior welter champion.

The decision was a formality, Georgie Benton over Jesse Smith that night in 1962. "I wasn't robbed," Smith said. "It wasn't a hometown decision. I lost." (A native Philadelphian, Smith divided his billing with Chicago.) As legendary scribe Jack McKinney described it, "Benton minimized the choreography by assuming a perfectly balanced stance at the perimeter of Smith's range. A geometry professor would have marveled at the functional precision. With a mere shift of his weight off the vertical line, Georgie was either just far enough out to avoid being hit or far enough in to do his own effective hitting." The entire house was 20 grand, not enough to pay half a McGirt-Taylor windup.

Meldrick showed the kind of rough edges to the press that had been missing from his fluid performance. Noticeably piqued at their trumpeting of McGirt, he rubbed the upset in.

"I can't understand why so many people underestimated me," he lamented. "I had a lot to prove to everybody."

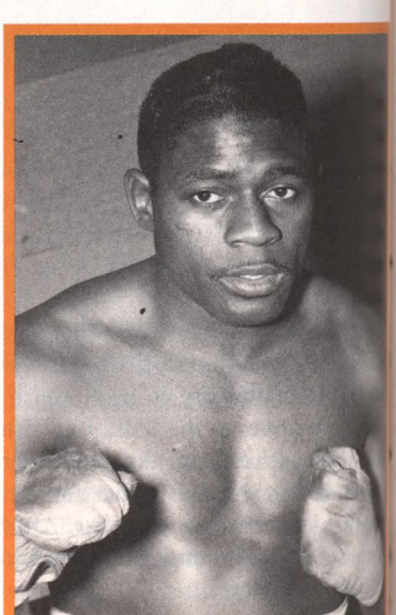
Though he had "proved" an accomplished stylist, Taylor was like the pitcher who wants to hit. His own emphasis was on the physical and emotional aspects of the contest.

"I took his heart, took his guts, took everything out of him in the first round," he declared. "That's when his heart dropped in his pants."

Lou Duva was more academic.

"We noticed in the tapes he moved his right hand around a lot, and we thought that the left hook could get him," he stated matter-of-factly.

The fallen McGirt was grandly magnanimous. "I ain't gonna make no excuses. I just lost, that was the bottom line," he confessed. (Days later, McGirt would recant to save trainer "Panama" Roca from scathing charges of overtraining. Drugs taken for an ear infection had robbed him of his pep, he would say.) "It was one of those days when nothing goes right for you. I tried to get the respect early, but he was outhitting me a hundred to one."



This is how Benton looked in 1962 when he beat Jesse Smith in a classic Philadelphia showdown. A super slick, hard-hitting technician during his fighting days, Benton passed on a lot of his knowledge to Taylor.

McGirt finally hit the canvas early in the 12th round, signaling Taylor to attack McGirt with a barrage of punches. McGirt's manager, Al Certo, saw enough and stopped the fight. Taylor was comfortably ahead on all three scorecards at the time of stoppage.

McGirt's elaborations became colorfully candid.

"That wasn't no second wind, that was comin' from the guts. My second wind was gone in the second round. He wasn't there to be hit, so there wasn't no sense to shadowbox for 12 rounds." Of the final demise, he offered, "Either my heart would bust, or my brain would bust. My manager thought my brain would bust, and that's why he jumped in."

There's little left of the Philly boxing of Benton's day. The zillion little gyms, which fed neighborhood rivalries that could telescope up to a city title that meant more locally than a world title, are gone. The loss of that competition has taken with it the kind of skills needed for survival in decades past. Meldrick Taylor would starve looking for Jesse Smiths today, while the quality of those fights has grown in stature with the disappearance of the skills they exhibited. Ironically, Benton candidly admits that much of his smoothness developed out of concern over late-round stamina. He sees the introduction of scientific physical culture as substituting power, speed, and endurance for skill, defense, and savvy. But the potential is there to develop super fighters who combine both approaches, if only TV didn't chew them up before they had time to learn their trade.

"If you lose a fight, you're done," Benton said. "Back then, you had guys who lost and won, lost and won, and sooner or later they caught on."

Meldrick figures he came up the hard way, which would hardly seem the case from the perspective of an earlier era. But in a way, he has a point. Winning the gold medal created a demand for performance almost from the start and had him in with guys like Dwight Pratchett, Harold Brazier, Robin Blake, Primo Ramos, and Howard Davis, against whom Meldrick seemed to deserve the edge, though all he got was a draw. But his stated goal is to "go down as one of the great fighters of all-time," not just a big fish in a drought-shrunken pond. Some things change, some things stay the same, and some things, it seems, have the potential to get better. ■

THE RING, January 1989

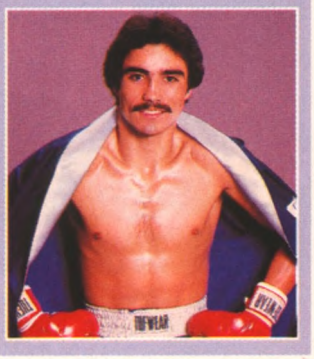
***The Cover*:** Meldrick Taylor proved that he was more than a public relations creation by beating Buddy McGirt for the IBF junior welterweight title. The undefeated Taylor continued the tradition of great Philly fighters whose talents were honed in gym wars.

***Sweet Seoul Music*:** The United States Olympic boxing team had a great showing at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, taking home three gold medals, three silvers, and three bronzes. Light middleweight Roy Jones (pictured) had to settle for silver in the biggest robbery in Olympic boxing history.

***Marvelous Marvin The Thespian*:** Marvin Hagler made the adjustment from fighter to actor after his retirement from boxing. One of his first TV roles came in an episode of the sitcom *Punky Brewster*. In a real stretch, the former middleweight champ played himself.

***Bruno A Brutal Number-One Contender*:** THE RING questioned the legitimacy behind Frank Bruno's elevation to number-one contender by a few alphabet organizations. While Bruno was good enough to be a top-10 contender, boxing pundits knew that Evander Holyfield should have rightfully held that number-one spot.

***Fighter Of The Month*:** Former WBA junior featherweight titlist Louie Espinosa climbed back into the featherweight title picture with an eight-round stoppage of Pedro Decima. Espinosa was trailing on two scorecards as late as the seventh round, but he knocked down Decima three times in the eighth for the victory.



COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

PROF. DE LA HOYA

Oscar De La Hoya gave Fernando Vargas a fistic lecture. He was so good that people thought Vargas fought better than he actually did. "El Feroz" threw a lot of punches, but most of them landed on "The Golden Boy's" shoulders or gloves. It was the Sweet Science at its zenith: Tire the bigger man and put him on his seat. Say what you want about trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr., but the man knows his stuff. I was utterly disgusted by commentator George Foreman's refusal to give Mayweather any credit.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Oscar De La Hoya reached legendary status with his 11th-round kno out of Fernando Vargas, according to reader J. L. Iverson-Baptis While reader Troy Morris also gives De La Hoya credit for the victo he places some of the blame on Vargas' corner and their failure protest De La Hoya's high protector.

De La Hoya can now be called a legend. He has done it all, from his spectacular gold medal win in Barcelona, to his absolute destruction of Fernando Varg There can be no more questions about De La Hoya. He has transcended the sport of boxing like other.

As for Vargas, he has proven to be nothing but a shooting star, with a big mouth that wri checks his behind can't cash. I can only imagine how absolutely stupid he must feel after all th talking about De La Hoya not being a real Mexican. Why, because he has ascended beyond his me ger beginnings? Is that a crime? Does being a real Mexican mean being a mediocre, hot-headed th with emotional problems? That's not being a Mexican, that's being Fernando Vargas.

J. L. IVERSON-BAPTIS
New York, N

VARGAS AT A DISADVANTAGE?

Oscar De La Hoya put on a masterful performance against Fernando Vargas. He completely ou boxed a very game Vargas, while taking a lot of punishment in return. However, I can't give Osc all the credit. I must give Vargas and his corner some of the credit for Oscar's victory. Wh didn't someone say or do something about the "rib shield" Oscar was allowed to wear during t fight? None of Fernando's bodypunches had any effect on Oscar.

I'm not trying to rain on Oscar's parade, but I can't help but wonder how things might ha turned out had Fernando been able to score effective bodyshots. It just didn't seem fair.

To Oscar: Good job. To Fernando: Hold your head up. You fought a brave fight and you're only 2 You'll be back.

TROY MORR
Plainfield, C

NOW YOU'VE DONE IT, ROY

Roy Jones has compelled me to write my first letter to a boxing publication. I have been involv in boxing for 30 years. I have marveled at the skills and natural talent that Jones has displayed sin

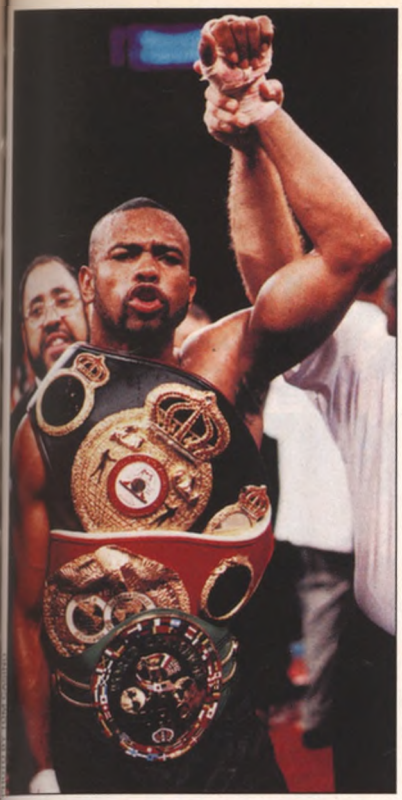


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

If Roy Jones regularly fought quality opponents as a pro, it would be obvious how great he is, says reader Greg Stapleton. But instead of proving his brilliance in the ring, Roy spends most of his time telling people how great he is.

his amateur days and was outraged with the oft-discussed robbery at the Seoul Olympics.

Even after one of the worst decisions in boxing history, Jones didn't whine uncontrollably to anyone who would listen. Do you know why? It was because we all saw it for ourselves, and Jones didn't have to continually remind us. We all knew that Jones was the rightful owner of that gold medal. You see, what is obvious needs no explanation.

Fast forward to Jones vs. Clinton Woods. I am simply a representative of the vast majority of the people who pay to see Jones fight. And it is for them that I have to tell Jones this: If you would regularly fight good competition, you wouldn't have to spend all of your air time telling us how great you are. It would be obvious.

GREG STAPLETON
Elizabethtown, KY

GRILLING BIG GEORGE

Has George Foreman been sticking his head under one of his grills, since he's been rating Lennox Lewis above Muhammad Ali? He needs to examine the facts: Ali missed three peak years of his career and still ruled in an era of greater depth and quality. He came back from knockdowns and was never knocked out until he was 38 years old. He also demonstrated more fluent combination punching, greater speed and agility, a more sound chin, and a greater variety of tactics. Lewis, however, surpasses Ali on punching power and has still been a great champion. But when you look at Lewis' supposed defining fight against Mike Tyson, he was fighting a man who was at least 10 years past his prime.

ANDY O'ROURKE
Liverpool, England

ALL HAIL ZALE

I always enjoy reading lists of the all-time greatest fighters, and I can usually remember that it's only a list, and not feel the need to criticize it. But in your recent "The 80 Best Fighters Of The Last 80 Years" annual, what accounts for the inexcusable absence of Tony Zale? Zale never dodged anyone and beat all the best middleweights during his reign, and at 35, Zale had enough pulverizing power to destroy the much younger Rocky Graziano. Zale was exciting enough to take part in three of THE RING's first four Fights of the Year. One can only imagine what Zale could have done had his prime years not been spent in the Navy during World War II. Zale would've walked right through many fighters scattered through your rankings, all the way up to the top 10. Perhaps the best evidence of this comes from Billy Soose, who said, "Whenever Zale hits you in the belly, it's like someone stuck a hot poker in you and left it in there."

BEN APATOFF
McLean, VA

A THIRD MAN THANK YOU

I cannot begin to tell you how honored I was to have seen my name in the prestigious RING rankings as the number-six rated best official in the September 2002 issue. Thank you very much for bestowing this acknowledgement. As a long-time reader of THE RING (my collection dates back to the 1960s), it is a life accomplishment that I rank very high. I assure you, as well as the sport, that I will work hard toward maintaining that degree of integrity.

FRANK GARZA
Lincoln Park, MI

KING KOSTYA

Kostya Tszyu's masterful boxing display against Ben Tackie may have surprised some U.S. fans, but it didn't surprise me.

After Vernon Forrest easily beat Shane Mosley in their first fight, I recall reading how Forrest had beaten Mosley in an important amateur bout in the early-1990s. Tszyu beat Forrest in '92 at the world amateur championships in Sydney, Australia. Tszyu was named outstanding boxer of the championships, and gave a brilliant exhibition of boxing against Forrest, with Forrest hardly landing a glove on him.

IAN DYER
Wangaratta, Australia ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Kostya Tszyu showed his boxing ability in taking a 12-round unanimous decision over Ben Tackie in May '02. American fans should be reminded, says reader Ian Dyer, that Tszyu easily defeated Vernon Forrest at the '92 world amateur championships.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

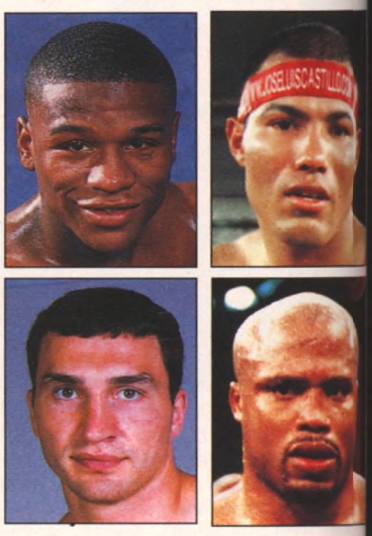
A DOUBLE DELIGHT OF HEAVIES AND LIGHTS

Get out your pen and paper, everybody, and send **Roy Jones** a thank you card. Because of Jones' stalling in negotiation for his proposed fight with **John Ruiz**, HBO's December 7 date has been freed up, and it's being filled with not one, but two main-event caliber fights.

In the first bout of the evening, lightweight champ **Floyd Mayweather** will face **Jose Luis Castillo** in a hotly anticipated rematch to their controversial and compelling April bout. And in a heavyweight main event that's huge in every imaginable way, number-one contender **Wladimir Klitschko**, all 6'6", 245 pounds of him, is set to collide with the 6'6", 260-pound **Jameel McCline**.

On paper, it's the best doubleheader HBO has brought us since December 19, 1998, when they presented another card featuring Mayweather and a tantalizing battle between heavyweight hopefuls. That night, Mayweather passed his toughest test to that point when he stopped **Angel Manfredy**, and **David Tua** scored a highly controversial kayo of **Hasim Rahman** in what HBO analyst **Larry Merchant** called the most important fight of the year.

This December in Las Vegas (probably at Mandalay Bay), Mayweather is facing what now qualifies as his toughest test, as Castillo gave him hell en route to dropping a highly disputed decision in their first go-round. The rematch was supposed to go off on October 5, but Castillo suffered an ankle injury in training, forcing a postponement. An extra two months of waiting will only add to the anticipation, as we get to find out who's *really* the best 135-pounder in the world.



Mayweather-Castillo, Klitschko-McCline: Dynamite doubleheader

And after Mayweather and Castillo are done, we'll find out who *really* deserves the next shot at heavyweight champ **Lennox Lewis**. Klitschko has been deemed the heir apparent by many, but he never faced a skilled, hard-hitting opponent his own size. Nobody fits that description better than "Big Time" McCline. This is the fight that should tell us whether Klitschko is ready for Lewis—and if he's not, maybe it will tell us that McCline is.

ANOTHER TANTALIZING TWIN BILL

On January 25, 2003, HBO will deliver another show with a main-event-worthy undercard bout, as **Vassiliy Jirov** will finally meet **James Toney** in the biggest cruiserweight fight since **Evander Holyfield** left the division.

The reason that's only a supporting bout is because the main event features the welterweight champion of the world, **Vernon Forrest**. Contrary to rumors that he'll be moving up to junior middle to face former beltholder **Javier Castillejo**, Forrest insists there's only one guy for whom he'd depart the welterweight division.

"There's three guys I've always wanted to fight: **Shane Mosley**, **Oscar De La Hoya**, and **Tito Trinidad**. I've fought Shane twice, and Trinidad is retired, so the only one left is De La Hoya," said Forrest. "I would move up for De La Hoya, but otherwise I plan to fight at welterweight and keep defending my title. I never said I was moving up. People have been saying that for me. I don't know how Castillejo's name started popping up everywhere, but I absolutely do not plan to move up to 154 to fight him."

As of press time, fellow 147-pound beltholders **Ricardo Mayorga**, **Antonio Margarito**, and **Michele Piccirillo** were looking like the leading candidates to face Forrest in January.

LISTEN UP

Even though it's a long way off, De La Hoya's next fight date has already been selected: May 4, 2003, the eve of Cinco de Mayo. The opponent will probably be Mosley, provided Sugar Shane doesn't suffer the upset of the century against badly faded **Yory Boy Campas** in February … Speaking of De La Hoya, the HBO Latino show he's involved with promoting, *Boxeo de Oro*, launches on January 16 … Keeping with this column's doubleheader theme, Osakajo Hall in Osaka, Japan, will host a quality double dip on December 20. THE RING's top-rated junior bantamweight, **Masamori Tokuyama**, will meet **Gerry Penalosa** for the second time (Tokuyama won a close decision in September '01), and strawweights **Noel Arambulet** and **Keitaro Hoshino** will also clash in a rematch to their July '02 encounter, which Arambulet won via majority decision.

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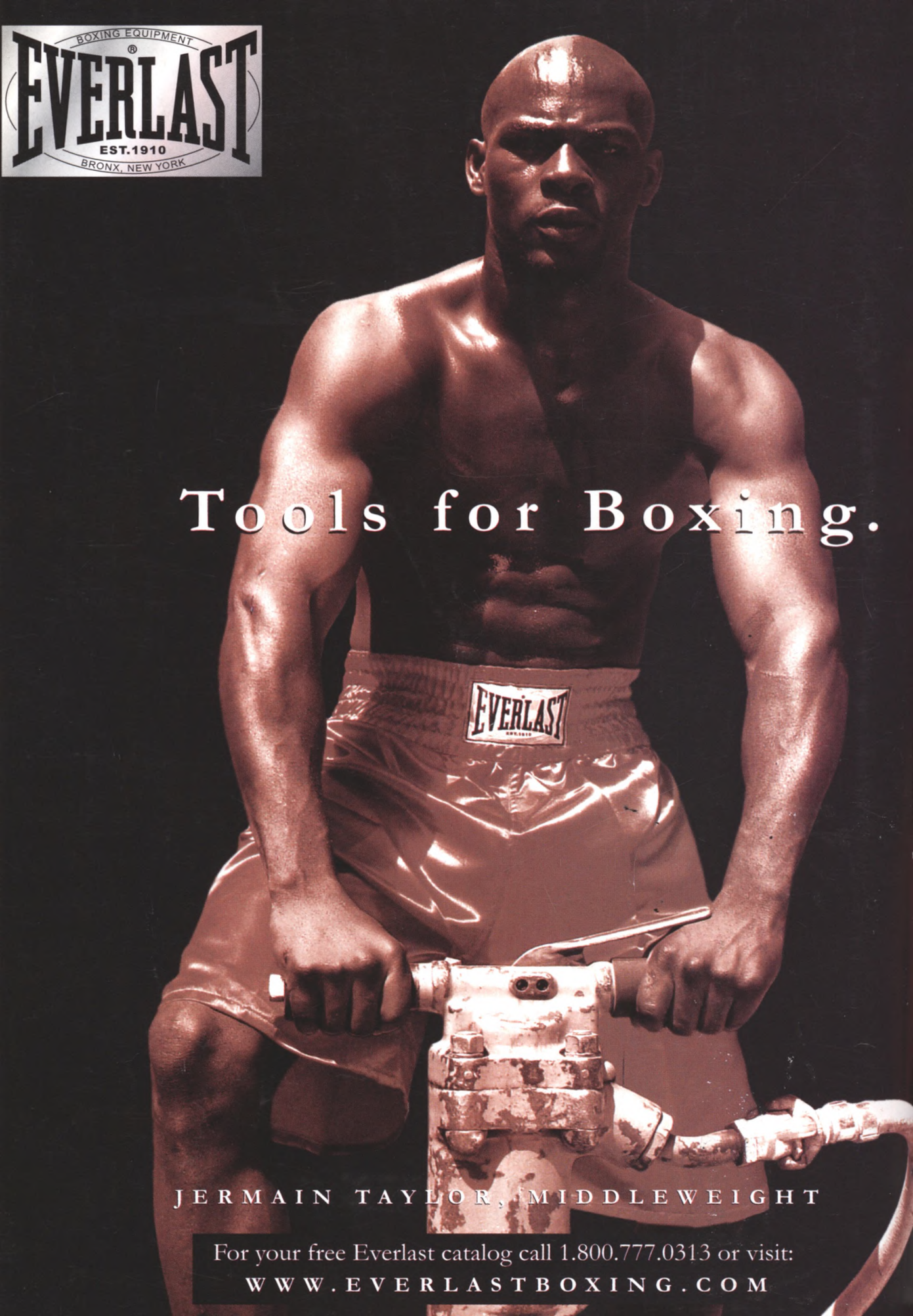
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